

Canadian Urban Libraries Council: Accessible Library Service Project

Date:	September 23, 2013
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) are working together to develop a plan to transition the library service currently provided by the CNIB to a newly established organization that will provide public libraries with the resources needed to serve Canadians with print-disabilities directly through their local public libraries. The new yet-to-be-named non-profit organization was recently incorporated and will be governed by a board composed of public libraries, stakeholders and end users.

Toronto Public Library (TPL) is participating on the working group CULC established to advance this project.

The CULC/CNIB plan leverages both the strengths of public libraries and the CNIB to establish a new organization that provides a comprehensive solution based on the fundamental right of print-disabled Canadians to read in the format of their choice and the role of public libraries in delivering this service by making alternate format material accessible.

The budget for the new organization is estimated to be \$5.8 million annually based on the current CNIB operation, and reflects a comprehensive all-in service delivery plan. The budget is based on federal, provincial and private sector funding with public libraries contributing through membership fees and/or subscriptions for access to content.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

TPL will provide in-kind support for the project and pay annual subscription fees for access to content. Subscription fees will be accommodated in the library collections budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Currently, the library needs of Canadians with print-disabilities are served primarily by the CNIB, a charitable organization. The CNIB provides service through 500 public libraries and a further 28,000 people through its library service. While supporting alternate format collections, public libraries rely on the CNIB's collection for additional resources.

CULC entered into discussions with CNIB in 2011 as part of its *Reading Re-Imagined* consultations conducted by the CNIB, and established a working group in 2012. The working group has developed a comprehensive solution that includes establishing a new organization, governed by a board composed of public libraries, stakeholders and end users, to take over responsibility for the library service currently provided by the CNIB. The CNIB has made it clear that as an organization primarily funded by charitable donations, it can no longer support the delivery of library service; it is also recognized that this service is more appropriately delivered by public libraries.

COMMENTS

Large public libraries in Canada are leading this project to improve access to library materials by Canadians with print-disabilities with the goal of offering this service to all public libraries, regardless of size. TPL is participating on the working group CULC established to advance this project.

In the new organization, public libraries will be responsible for areas where they have expertise such as selection of new titles for the collection and collection building, cataloguing, efficiency reviews and, most importantly, direct service delivery to Canadians with print-disabilities. The new yet-to-be-named non-profit organization was recently incorporated and will be governed by a board composed of public libraries, stakeholders and end users.

This new organization will aggregate alternate format resources from across Canada into one location and deliver materials to public libraries on request, so print-disabled Canadians receive service directly from their local public libraries.

The CNIB's expertise and resources would be leveraged for the new organization with:

- The most significant alternate format collection in Canada which, at 80,000 unique titles, is rich in content and diversity of format including braille, audiobook on daisy CD and digital that encompasses both e-audio and e-braille;
- Recording studios, production systems and infrastructure for the creation of alternate formats including CDs, braille embossing and transcription;
- Library processing operation and distribution centre;
- Technical expertise and support;
- Robust and scalable technological infrastructure upgraded as a result of recent federal funding, and already scaled to serve 1 million Canadians in whatever format they choose.

There has been public investment in the CNIB with contributions from the federal government and some provinces such as the recent \$3.2 million allocated in the Ontario provincial budget to support the CNIB's public library lending program.

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Recruitment of a project leader is currently underway. The timeframe for the launch of the CULC project is spring 2014.

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SIGNATURE

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