

April 30, 2012

a.

The Honourable Christian Paradis
Minister of Industry
Industry Canada
C.D. Howe Building
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

Dear Minister Paradis:

**Re: Industry Canada's recent announcement to cut funding of the
Community Access Program (CAP), effective March 31, 2012**

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Public Library Board in response to the Government of Canada's recent decision to terminate the Community Access Program.

Since 2000, the Toronto Public Library has benefited from CAP funding to increase and sustain our public Internet access. During the initial years of the program, the funding was critical to greatly expanding Torontonian's access to the Internet. In recent years, the funding, although reduced considerably, has helped to sustain broadband Internet access. The Library wishes to acknowledge and thank the Government for this ongoing support of a critical resource.

The Library plays a vital role in ensuring free access to computers and the Internet to bridge the digital divide. According to the most recent Statistics Canada study on Internet use, 17% of Torontonians with incomes less than \$60,000 utilize the public library to access the Internet, higher than the national average. The Internet is increasingly essential for accessing employment opportunities and government information on programs and services. Indeed, the Government of Canada's recent decision to discontinue its print publications and transition to exclusively electronic distribution over the next two years underscores this fundamental shift in access. The public library is a key institution in ensuring equitable Internet access and the fundamental democratic right of access to government information.

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We urge the Government of Canada to reconsider its recent decision to terminate the Community Access Program. We remain committed to providing public Internet access and welcome the federal government as a partner in that commitment.

Sincerely,

Councillor Paul Ainslie
Chair, Toronto Public Library Board