



To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries

April 23, 2012

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

Dear Minister Paradis,

The BC Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) represents more than 700 public library trustees on 77 library, library association and library federation boards across the province. These volunteers are responsible for the annual budgets of their respective libraries, which provide a range of community and literacy services to more than 99% of the population in British Columbia.

The BCLTA, on behalf of our membership, is gravely concerned about the cuts you have made to Industry Canada's Community Access Program, which will affect 135 sites in some of our province's most vulnerable and remote communities.

In these communities, public access computers allow those who cannot afford a computer or high-speed Internet access to become part of the digital world. In particular, the needs of seniors, low-income and struggling families, job-seekers, new Canadians, rural residents, seasonal workers, and youth will be most affected by the demise of CAP funding. They will be forced to cope with reduced access to government services, employment services, homework help and databases, and less support for finding information on the internet and developing needed technology skills.

Many small and rural B.C. libraries now face a substantial reduction in their already-inadequate operating budgets as a result of this cut. Denying them the ability to upgrade computer equipment and offer in-demand Internet training programs is a blow which will negatively affect the competitiveness of these communities and their citizens across Canada.

While we understand that your government is committed to a balanced budget which requires prioritizing expenditures, it is unacceptable to our members that this balancing process should come at the expense of the poorest members of our society.

We therefore urge your government to reinstate the Community Access Program as quickly as possible.

Respectfully yours,

Paul Tutsch
Vice President