

As President of the Nova Scotia Library Association (NSLA) I would like to encourage you as a Member of Parliament for Nova Scotia to support Bill C-322, an Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (library materials), re-introduced by Mr. Merv Tweed, MP for Brandon—Souris, Manitoba. The entire library community remains concerned about the sustainability of the Library Book Rate, which contributes to the public policy goals of literacy, lifelong learning, inclusion, and vibrant communities.

With over 2,000 libraries actively using the Library Book Rate and over one million Canadians benefiting from it annually, it is an indispensable part of the service delivered by the public, academic, school and special libraries that make up the Canadian Library Association.

I am also pleased to see that the bill will also expand the traditional book program to include non-print materials such as CDs and DVDs. The addition of audio-visual materials recognizes that people are not all text-based learners and need access to information through a whole host of audio-visual and digital media.

The Library Book Rate supports and encourages the sharing of taxpayer-funded library books in Canada. At relatively little cost, it acts as a bridge between all Canadians, including the disabled, the shut-ins, and residents in remote locations. It is also a way of creating a more literate and knowing population, by helping, for example, students enrolled in distance education programs or Canadians pursuing lifelong learning goals.

The numerous testimonies received from librarians on the Library Book Rate indicate that if the program were discontinued, the following results would ensue:

- It would severely reduce access to books for people living in rural and remote Canada;
- It would 'disable' the level of service libraries provide, possibly forcing the program onto a cost-recovery basis, with patrons and distance learners having to bear the costs. Such user fees would discourage some patrons from making mail-based borrowing requests;
- Smaller libraries would have to drop out of providing lending services and would only borrow materials;
- It would deprive the rest of the country from being able to access the unique information resources often preserved in local libraries;
- It would deny access to the homebound;
- It would result, in brief, in a two-tier library service that would invalidate the concept of a common literary heritage that all Canadians have equal access to.

It is absolutely vital that the Government of Canada guarantee support for the Library Book Rate. I offer my full support for Bill C-322 and urge all Members of Parliament to do the same.

Once again, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Yvette Frost
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