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May 20, 2021

Tony Van Bynen, M.P.
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
tony.vanbynen@parl.gc.ca

Dear Tony,

As you know, the federal government recently decided to reverse its proposed cuts to funding for accessible book production and distribution. This decision recognizes how important accessible books are for the 1 in 10 people with print disabilities. I am writing to thank you for the reprieve and to ask that you ensure that long term sustained funding is provided to the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA). CELA provides necessary reading materials for people with print disabilities including those with vision loss, learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

Unfortunately, the federal government's recent announcement offers no assurances for longer term funding which is still set to be fully withdrawn by the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Without a funding guarantee, CELA may face a 50% reduction to its production and distribution budget next year which will have a devastating impact on their ability to produce and distribute accessible reading materials. Libraries across the country rely on CELA to provide accessible reading materials and support to our patrons in ways that are cost effective and equitable.

The federal government has promoted its commitment to equity and inclusion for those with disabilities. We know that access to reading materials directly impacts academic and economic success and social inclusion, particularly for the estimated 3 million people across Canada with print disabilities. And yet the proposed cuts in 2022 and beyond will reduce access to reading materials, widening the gap for services and resources and increasing regional and income disparity.

We cannot let this happen. On behalf of our patrons, we request that you ask the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, the Hon. Carla Qualtrough, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance,

the Hon. Chrystia Freeland, to commit to ongoing, stable funding so those with reading disabilities across Canada are not left further behind.

Thank you. I look forward to your personal response.

Yours sincerely,

Darcy McNeill, Library Board Chair
Board@newmarketpl.ca

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