



**CANADA'S BOOK PUBLISHERS: TELLING OUR STORIES, GROWING OUR ECONOMY**  
**SUBMISSION TO ONTARIO'S CULTURE STRATEGY**  
**DECEMBER 2015**

The Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) congratulates Premier Wynne and Minister Coteau for initiating the development of a culture strategy for Ontario. The province offers a wealth of cultural experiences for Ontarians to participate in and enjoy, and the cultural industries, including book publishing, are an important driver of economic development.

**BACKGROUND**

The ACP represents 115 English-language book publishers from all ten provinces and Nunavut. Our members are independent businesses, owned and operated by Canadians; half are based in Ontario, and we are affiliated with the Ontario Book Publishers Organization (OBPO), our provincial counterpart. Canadian-owned publishers produce the vast majority of books written by Canadian authors each year, contribute to local economies, and are a vital part of Canada's cultural industries. We take pride in what has been created over the past fifty years: the seminal works of Canadian literature and history; the launching of careers of writers now internationally honoured at the highest levels; learning resources published to the specific needs of Canadian students; children's books that are beloved around the world; and a resourceful, competitive, and professional independent publishing sector.

These accomplishments have been made possible in part by judicious government investment and far-sighted public policy. In Ontario, these measures include the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit (OBPTC) and the programs of the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC) and Ontario Arts Council (OAC). These complementary programs have helped make Ontario a national hub for Canadian independent publishing, and ensure that the work of Ontario writers finds the widest possible audience.

Some facts about publishing in Ontario:

- An estimated 15,000 books are published in Ontario annually.
- Book publishing in Canada is a \$1.9 billion industry, with nearly two-thirds of revenues generated in Ontario.
- Ontario-based, Canadian-owned book publishers paid \$256 million in wages, salaries, and benefits in 2012.

As outlined in the Culture Strategy discussion paper, Ontario culture—in all shapes and forms—is rich and abundant. Book publishers are an important component of the province's cultural landscape, and bring Ontario stories to readers across the province, country, and around the world. Canada is a nation



of readers, and Canadians regularly turn to books for education, information, and entertainment. Reading is a cultural activity that crosses demographics, and public opinion research consistently demonstrates that books offer readers good value for their entertainment dollar.

Recent public opinion research clearly demonstrates the value Canadians place on books and reading, and 80% of Canadians report reading books on a regular basis. This percentage has risen over the past 35 years, and despite competition from a range of screen-based media, reading remains a popular way for Canadians to spend their leisure time—on average, nearly one-quarter of leisure time is spent reading books. This can be attributed to the positive contributions reading makes to quality of life and the good value for money books offer; both factors are recognized by Canadians, who also ascribe strong social and economic benefits to reading.

## **THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF ONTARIO'S CULTURE STRATEGY AND BOOK PUBLISHING**

### ***Creativity and innovation***

Book publishing is, by its nature, a creative and collaborative business. Many of the companies founded in the 1960s, '70s and '80s are now run by a new generation of owners, who continue to publish high quality Canadian writing, while also experimenting with innovative technology and business models. Younger firms are also flourishing, with publishers' mix of creativity, entrepreneurial skill, and business savvy adding to the rich tradition of independent publishing in Ontario and across the country.

The business now includes both print and digital products; 92% of small- and medium-sized publishing firms produced ebooks in 2014. Despite the rapid and comprehensive adaptation of our industry to new opportunities in the digital market, return on this investment has been incremental; the majority of Canadian publishers derive less than 10% of their revenue from digital sales. However, the print business is also driven by digital technology and innovation. Ontario firms have widely adopted digital production methods, and are now experts in the digital marketing of their books, authors, and companies.

### ***Quality of life and economic development***

Publishers enhance Ontarians' quality of life through the diversity of books they produce, and are also key players in building a creative economy. Ontario-published books are read for education, information, and recreation, and thanks to the province's excellent network of public libraries are accessible in communities across Ontario.

As small- and medium-sized businesses, Ontario publishers contribute to job creation and economic development in a number of ways. Firms are responsible for direct employment in publishing offices in communities across the province. They are also regular investors in the work of Ontario and Canadian



authors and illustrators to whom advances for new books and royalties on ongoing sales of existing books are paid. As publishers of the vast majority of new books written by Canadian authors each year, publishers' role in contributing to the income of Canadian creators is an important one. In fact, for many of our members, the author royalties paid out each year exceed the company payroll.

Publishers are also an important revenue driver for self-employment in the Ontario and Canadian book industries—the network of freelance editors and designers, as well as independent contractors such as sales reps, IT professionals and digital marketers who contribute their skills and expertise to the publishing process. We are active participants in the retail market, and our books showcase the tourism, recreation, and food sectors in communities across the province, strengthening local economies.

### ***Diversity and inclusiveness***

A vibrant independent publishing sector is essential to fostering a book and reading culture that reflects the lives of Ontarians today. The business models of the large multinational firms that operate Canadian branches are not well-suited to publishing works that go beyond the mainstream. Instead they publish only the most likely bestsellers, which will appeal to the broadest possible audience. These books do not include in large numbers those that reflect the diversity of Ontario's population in terms of race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and ability.

Since their founding in the 1970s and '80s, Ontario and Canadian book publishers have been leaders in what have come to be known in recent years as "diverse books." These firms take risks on titles that larger firms might deem too challenging to sell or market, and their lists reflect the rich diversity we see in Ontario's population today. These books have the potential to open doors to the full range of Ontario communities, and share experiences across the population.

### ***Respect for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples***

Ontario publishers, including Indigenous-owned firms, publish works by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, and strive to bring their stories and culture to a wider audience. Several initiatives have been introduced across the country to support publishers in this work. The *Aboriginal Style Guide*, developed by BC-based Indigenous press Theytus Books, is available to ACP members, and in 2014 the Saskatchewan Arts Board introduced an Aboriginal Editors Circle to provide Indigenous editors and publishers with peer mentorship and informed dialogue about issues distinct to editing manuscripts by Indigenous authors. In response to significant demand, the Arts Council has also developed a complementary program for non-Indigenous editors and publishers who work with Indigenous authors. ACP is also a partner in the Burt Award for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Literature, which celebrates the best in Indigenous writing for Aboriginal youth.



### ***Public value and accountability***

The ACP and its members are grateful for the investment the government of Ontario has made in our industry through the programs of the OMDC and OAC. These programs are professionally managed and efficiently run, and applicants are held to the highest standards. The modest investment from government returns both economic and cultural value to Ontarians. The Ontario Book Fund, for example, has generated a return of 363% for every dollar spent, and has increased revenues for Ontario book publishers by \$44.3 million, and the Export Fund has helped generate \$5.8 million in international sales from an investment of \$250,000.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

The questions included in the discussion paper touch on a wide variety of themes. We will address four below.

### ***Q. How can we help the culture sector respond to digital challenges and opportunities?***

#### **A. Increase direct investment in the development of digital publishing capacity via the programs of the OAC, OMDC, and OBPTC.**

The capacity for digital production, sales, and marketing among Canadian publishing firms has grown significantly over the past decade. Though the majority of Canadian publishers' sales revenue continues to come from the sale of print books, those books are written, edited, designed, and produced using digital technologies, and publishers often release digital editions simultaneously with print. Many firms have invested in developing e-commerce solutions for their own websites, and virtually all are engaged in a full range of digital marketing activities, including social media marketing, digital catalogues, and more.

As publishers' digital strategies have grown in sophistication, browsing, whether in-store or online, remains the most common way that readers discover new books. For this reason, it's not surprising that a 2014 survey of Canada Book Fund recipients conducted by the Department of Canadian Heritage identified the closure of bricks-and-mortar bookstores and reduced shelf space for books in stores as the top two challenges facing Canadian-owned and -controlled book publishers. (The cost associated with developing ebooks was listed third.) Though these challenges appear rooted in the print book world, they have significant implications for digital book discovery as more readers turn to online retailers for both print and ebook purchases.

Online retail provides an extremely convenient experience for readers interested in purchasing a specific title they have previously identified, or a work by an author familiar to them; for those seeking to



discover books of which they are unaware, the experience is quite different. Discoverability results directly from curation of the inventory on offer. In online environments, curation is largely a function of system algorithms, and these, while increasingly sophisticated, still fall very far short of the standard of human curation in matching specific books with individual reader interest.

Publishers have addressed this challenge using a variety of tools, including collective projects like 49th Shelf ([www.49thShelf.com](http://www.49thShelf.com)), and eBOUND Canada's library ebook recommendation engine. These projects have both benefited from the support of the Ontario government, through the OMDC and Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the funding programs have enabled publishers to collectively respond to the discoverability challenge. Sustained investment to allow this type of work to continue is essential to publishers' continued ability to respond to digital developments as they arise. Book publishers would also benefit from increases in funding support as other sectors, such as music and interactive digital media, have recently enjoyed.

***Q. How can we inspire more youth to create, consume and participate in Ontario culture?***

**A. Acknowledge the critical economic and social benefits of reading and reinvest in school library infrastructure.**

The economic and social benefits of reading are clear: improved academic performance, increased civic engagement, enriched understanding of one's community and region, and enhanced quality of life. Fostering a lifelong love of reading begins in childhood. School libraries, well-stocked with Canadian books and staffed by trained teacher-librarians, and school time dedicated to reading for pleasure, are tangible ways to inspire Ontario youth to engage with reading and literary culture.

Since the early 1990s, school libraries across Ontario have suffered severe cuts, and today's students are far less likely to have access to what was once a cornerstone of cultural activity and engagement in schools. Studies continue to demonstrate a positive correlation between student achievement and reading engagement with appropriately staffed and resourced school libraries. EQAO tests administered to Gr. 3 and 6 students have shown that in elementary schools with teacher-librarians, students are more likely to report that they "like to read" than in those without this resource. It is time for Ontario to re-invest in its school library infrastructure, not only to improve student achievement, but to foster in youth engagement with Canadian stories and a love of reading that will last a lifetime.

The Ontario Library Association's (OLA) Forest of Reading program demonstrates the power contemporary Canadian children's literature can have on youth engagement with culture and the written word. Each year, OLA committees develop reading lists made up of recently-published Canadian-authored children's books for use in the program across several grade levels. The lists are varied, and



encourage participating students to read widely. Students vote for the winners, and awards are presented at celebrations across the province. In Toronto, thousands of students participate in the two-day Festival of Trees, and the nominated authors who attend often say that the students' enthusiasm for and engagement with the books make them feel like rock stars.

The program has been such a long-running success for a number of reasons: the initial book lists are carefully selected by professional librarians; the books are written by contemporary Canadian writers, whom students can meet in person or interact with online; the books are often about local subjects and themes, which resonate with readers; and most importantly, youth are given agency in selecting the winning books. With the tools and infrastructure to support them, programs like the Forest of Reading can go a long way to foster youth engagement with arts and culture.

***Q. What is the Ontario government doing well to support the cultural industries sector? What would you like to see changed? Are there best practices that Ontario could learn from and adapt?***

**A. Ontario's strategic investment in book publishing could be further leveraged by encouraging the purchase of Canadian books, and paying for the use of copyrighted materials, in Ontario schools.**

As a national organization, ACP members have the opportunity to share information across provinces and compare notes on the publishing support programs available in different regions of the country. For many years, Ontario has been held up as an example by other provinces in how to effectively invest in cultural industries. Across the country and around the world, Ontario is viewed as a respected leader for its investment in the cultural industries. Many provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, have created agencies modeled on the OMDC.

The investment in OMDC, along with OAC programs, has been essential to the growth and development of a professional book publishing industry in Ontario. Books published by Ontario- and Canadian-owned firms are edited, produced, and designed to the highest quality, and are recognized at the highest levels for their professional excellence. Though our books are recognized by prize juries and critics as among the best in the world, sharing Canadian stories with Ontario students remains a significant challenge, and Canadian-authored and -published books are underrepresented in school and classroom library collections. Schools have discretion with respect to the supplementary resources they purchase, and are more likely to purchase imported books that are heavily promoted by library wholesalers, who earn higher profit margins on these titles that benefit from economies of scale. The investment government has made in our industry would reap even greater return if incentives were created to encourage the purchase of Canadian resources in Ontario schools.



Further to this would be a return to a fair interpretation of copyright law and restoration of payment for the use of copyrighted materials in Ontario schools. Following the addition of education as a purpose for fair dealing under the *Copyright Modernization Act*, in 2013 the Ontario Ministry of Education adopted “fair dealing guidelines,” which have resulted in a dramatic loss of revenue for Ontario publishers and creators. This damage limits the sector’s capacity to invest in new content that reflects the needs and realities of Ontario students, and threatens the continued supply of high quality learning resources in Ontario. Working with the Council of Ministers of Education, the Ontario Minister of Education has an opportunity to be a leader in this area, and encourage a return to fair payment for copyright protected works.

***Q. In a time of scarce resources, what key culture priorities should the Ontario government support? How can your organization work in partnership with government to support these priorities?***

**A. Mandate the inclusion of Canadian literature in Ontario curricula.**

ACP recognizes that resources are scarce, and is grateful for sustained support of the Ontario book publishing through a range of strategically designed programs and tax credits. As described above, these programs are essential to a competitive Ontario publishing sector that is well-positioned to meet both the challenges and opportunities of today’s marketplace.

At the same time, Ontario culture could be supported by the reallocation of existing resources. For example, funds currently budgeted for the purchase of school texts or library books could be spent on Ontario and Canadian texts in place of imported books that present American perspectives and views. No new funding would be required to increase the presence of Ontario- and Canadian-authored books in Canadian schools, only commitment and leadership from the province to encourage librarians and educators to buy Canadian. Ontario and Canadian publishers produce a wealth of resources to support teachers and librarians in discovering Canadian books. For example, 49th Shelf ([www.49thShelf.com](http://www.49thShelf.com)) is the largest collection of Canadian books ever assembled, and includes a dedicated section for librarians and educators. This tool could be promoted by the government to support the discovery and purchase of Canadian books for the classroom.

In addition, the Ontario Language and English Curricula could be updated to reflect a commitment to Canadian culture and literature, by mandating the study of Canadian literature in Ontario schools. British Columbia made national headlines when the province mandated the teaching of one Canadian novel per year from Gr. 8-12. A similar commitment to Canadian literature would be welcome in Ontario, and would ensure that students in this province are exposed to voices that represent their realities and experiences.



## CONCLUSION

Canadian book publishers have contributed to the growth and flourishing of a vibrant writing and publishing sector in the province of Ontario. Publishers connect Ontario stories with readers across the province and around the world, and their investment in local economies is a driver for economic growth. We look forward to working in partnership with the Government of Ontario to advance our shared goals through the Culture Strategy.

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For further reading:

*Economic Impacts of the Canadian Educational Sector's Fair Dealing Guidelines*, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2015. Available: <http://www.accesscopyright.ca/media/bulletins/impacts-of-the-education-sector%E2%80%99s-interpretation-of-fair-dealing/>.

*Industry Profile: Book Publishing*, Ontario Media Development Corporation, 2014. Available: [http://www.omdc.on.ca/Assets/Industry+Profile/Book/Industry+Profile+Book\\_en.pdf](http://www.omdc.on.ca/Assets/Industry+Profile/Book/Industry+Profile+Book_en.pdf).

*Public Opinion on the Value of Books in the English Language Book Sector*, EKOS, 2015. Available: <http://publishers.ca/index.php/resources/acp-research>.

*Reading for Joy*, People for Education, 2011. Available: <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/People-for-Education-report-on-students-reading-enjoyment-Reading-for-Joy.pdf>.

*The State of Digital Publishing in Canada 2014*, BookNet Canada, 2015. Available: [http://issuu.com/booknetcanada/docs/bnc\\_research\\_state\\_of\\_digital\\_publi?e=19249060/30399429](http://issuu.com/booknetcanada/docs/bnc_research_state_of_digital_publi?e=19249060/30399429).

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