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ACP welcomes Budget 2021 commitments and seeks targeted support for book publishers in its implementation

April 20, 2021

The Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) welcomes the tabling of Budget 2021, which charts the course for Canada’s economic recovery from COVID-19. In addition to targeted support for the arts and culture sector, the budget includes a much-needed extension of emergency support programs like the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy. These broad-based programs have been instrumental to maintaining industry capacity over the last year. Canadian-owned publishers’ access to additional funding supports will be critical through the pandemic recovery period.

ACP looks forward to working in collaboration with Canadian Heritage as details of the two-year, \$300M Recovery Fund for Heritage, Arts, Culture, Heritage and Sport Sectors unfold, and notes the continued need for support for independent Canadian book publishers. As of February 2021, only 33% of English-language publishers have full confidence that they will be able to maintain their publishing programs at pre-pandemic levels. Though consumer book sales have rebounded, longstanding structural challenges have meant that pandemic recovery has been uneven across our industry. Barriers to market that small- and medium-sized independent presses faced prior to 2020 are becoming more entrenched.

Budget 2021 acknowledges the essential role Canadian publishers play in bringing our stories to readers across Canada and around the world. Investment in domestic infrastructure is welcome and ACP is keen to learn more about the budget’s investment in support for Canadian bookstores to increase online sales of Canadian books.

“The pandemic has underscored the interconnectedness of the Canadian book ecosystem and Canadian bookstores have risen to the challenge of serving their customers over the past year,” said ACP President Melissa Pitts. “Companies large and small have implemented online infrastructure as a complement to their bricks-and-mortar business, and we know that

for some book buyers online will remain a primary channel for book discovery and purchase. We value our continuing partnership with the retail sector and working together to efficiently bring Canadian books to Canadian readers.”

Budget 2021 also acknowledges the role Canadian publishers play in bringing diverse Canadian voices to readers around the world, and we remain excited to showcase the excellence of our work at this fall’s Frankfurt Book Fair as Guest of Honour, an initiative postponed from 2020 due to the pandemic. ACP is grateful to the Government of Canada for its ongoing commitment to the Guest of Honour program and the international promotion of Canadian writing and publishing.

Importantly, ACP remains committed to the continued discussion with Canadian Heritage and the Department of Finance about the need for new, permanent investment in the Canada Book Fund (CBF), which has not seen its budget increased for twenty years, since 2001. “The need for an increase to the CBF was widely acknowledged by government and industry before COVID-19,” said Kate Edwards, ACP Executive Director. “The pandemic has shifted this longstanding need from overdue to critical. We welcome the government’s investment in arts and culture organizations to support COVID-19 recovery, and emphasize the need for a longer-term discussion about sustainable support for the Canadian book publishers.”

ACP is the national voice of English-language Canadian-owned book publishers. ACP contributes to the development and maintenance of vibrant, competitive book publishing companies in order to support and strengthen the contribution that Canadian books make to Canada’s cultural, economic, and educational landscape.

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