



.. ontario library association

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

Open Letter to Industry Canada

April 11, 2012

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Library Association in response to the recent decision to terminate the Community Access Program (CAP).

The Ontario Library Association includes more than 5,000 members who work in all library sectors and whom are committed to excellence in library services. In the past year, in Ontario alone, 1,078 CAP sites of which 563 are public library and school sites provided internet access, training, and support to more than 2.4 million people.

The key objectives met by the CAP program have wholly supported the priorities of the federal government and Canadians in the areas of equitable Internet access, building digital literacy, access to government information, and supporting economic development as outlined below:

Equitable Internet Access:

A review of OECD statistics shows that Canada does not place in the top 15 for broadband access, high speed, and affordability. Public libraries and other community agencies are the only broadband point for more than 25% of Canadians who primarily live in rural or remote areas or are unable to afford computer access. The federal government needs to support programs that ensure 100% of Canadians are connected. In 2010/11, more than 2.4 million Ontarians visited a CAP site and more than 56,000 received specific training. Please note that 54% of CAP sites were in rural or remote areas of the province.

Building digital literacy

We applaud the decision to continue the CAP Youth Initiative funding. This program not only provides critical work experience for young people, it is a key opportunity for many Canadians to learn how to use the Internet and to access information. One of the objectives of the CAP program was to provide enhanced accessibility for people with disabilities through the provision of hardware and software for computer access. Without the CAP site support it will become more challenging for the CAP Youth Initiative to thrive.



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Access to Government Information:

Access to federal government information and services has been provided by public libraries largely due to CAP and we urge the federal government to continue to remain a partner in this dissemination of information and to support this access point, particularly for those in rural and/or remote areas.

Supporting Economic Development

Currently, Canada lags in e-commerce development for online consumption particularly for small and medium sized businesses. A key goal of CAP sites is to engage and encourage local business development. This past year in Ontario more than 34,000 small businesses, farmers, and non-profits used CAP sites.

If there is no opportunity to reconsider the termination of the CAP program, then the Ontario Library Association would welcome the opportunity to develop another partnership program that supports the above priorities for the federal government and all Canadians.

Best Regards,



Karen McGrath, President

Cc. Prime Minister Stephen Harper