

June 14, 2019

Mayor and Council  
6911 No. 3 Road  
Richmond, BC  
V6Y 2C1

Dear Mayor and Council:

**Re: Municipal Support for Increased Library Access to Digital Publications**

The Richmond Public Library Board is writing to ask for your support in recognizing the important role that Richmond Public Library (RPL) plays in our community by helping us to advocate for a solution to the barriers that Canadian libraries face in accessing digital publications.

Libraries and the early literacy programs they run are integral to developing proficient readers and ensuring that kids succeed in school. More and more, digital literacy programs run by public libraries also help ensure that citizens can contribute to and participate in our increasingly digital world. Additionally, for many seniors, lower income families, youth and new Canadians, the library provides access to information they may not otherwise be able to obtain.

Members of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council/Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CULC/CBUC) spend approximately \$100 million in public funds annually on library acquisitions. In Richmond, the library spends \$1,274,400 every year to ensure that we acquire publications and other resources in demand by Richmond residents. Approximately \$380,000 of this collections budget is dedicated to digital publications annually.

Even with these significant expenditures, RPL struggles to obtain digital publications from multinational publishers, due to cost pressures and the often-strict licensing limitations applied to digital publications. By way of example, Canadian author Louise Penny's book *Kingdom of the Blind* is available to libraries for \$13 as a paperback, \$22 in hard cover and \$60 in digital form. The \$60 cost would allow the book to be checked out electronically 52 times or for two years – whichever happens first. A paper edition would be expected to last three to four years at a substantially reduced cost. This book is not currently available in any e-audio format to Canadian libraries.

These restrictions and costs make it increasingly difficult for libraries to provide access to a wide range of digital publications and in a variety of formats to meet changing community needs. Restrictions on libraries accessing digital publications – including books and newspapers limits RPL's capacity to provide modern, digitized services to our residents.

The lack of access to digital publications is a problem we feel governments need to be aware of. CULC member libraries will be asking their Members of Parliament as well as candidates from all parties in Federal Election 2019, to recognize that libraries serve important demographic groups by providing access to materials that allow them to learn and grow and that the Federal government has a key role to play in ensuring that Canadian libraries can meet the increasing demand for digital publications.

The Richmond Public Library Board would like to request that the City of Richmond formally recognize the important role that libraries play in our communities and call on the Federal Government to prioritize finding a solution for the barriers that Canadian libraries face in accessing digital publications. We respectfully request that the City of Richmond consider:

1. Supporting the draft resolution "Increased Library Access to Digital Publications" provided to the Richmond Public Library by CULC and which is being passed by municipalities across Canada. The draft resolution is included for your reference (attachment 1).
2. Sending letters of support for the adopted resolution to local Members of the Provincial Legislative Assembly, local Federal Election candidates, and the Federal Minister of Canadian Heritage.

We would be pleased to have an opportunity to discuss this further and thank you in advance for your continued support.

Sincerely;



Robin Leung, Board Chair, on behalf of the Richmond Public Library Board of Trustees

Attachment 1: Draft Resolution

cc: Susan Walters, Chief Librarian and Secretary to the Board

## **Attachment 1**

### **DRAFT MUNICIPAL RESOLUTION**

#### **Increased Library Access to Digital Publications**

**Richmond, BC**

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond recognizes the important role that libraries play in our community. Libraries and the early literacy programs that they run are integral to developing proficient readers and ensuring that children succeed in school. More and more, digital literacy programs run by libraries also help to ensure that citizens can contribute to our digital world. Additionally, vulnerable demographic groups including seniors, low income families, youth, and new Canadians rely on access to libraries as an important tool for their participation in the community - from education to searching for jobs to consuming Canadian cultural materials, and

WHEREAS, libraries in our community recognize that our users increasingly seek to access digital publications offered by multinational publishers, and that access to those publications is too often curtailed by prohibitively high licensing fees or else entirely denied to Canadian libraries, and

WHEREAS, libraries must be in a position to offer digital publications to their users as part of their service offering to our community, particularly given the contemporary rapid pace of digitization of educational and cultural materials.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Richmond does hereby:

1. Indicate our support for the Canadian Urban Libraries Council in its efforts to increase access to digital publications for library users in the City of Richmond and across Canada.
2. Call on the Federal government to investigate the barriers faced by libraries in acquiring digital publications and the problems that poses for vulnerable demographic groups in Canada; and
3. Further ask the Federal government to develop a solution that increases access to digital publications across Canada and assists libraries in meeting the cost requirements to acquire digital publications.