House of Commons
Chambre des communes
Canada

House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance – Pre-budget Consultations 2013

This brief is submitted by:

(●) **an organization** **Organization name:** Canadian National Institute for the Blind

or

( ) **an individual** **Name:** _____

Topic: Disabled persons

*Recommendation 1: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

In 2013-14, the Federal Government provided $3million to CNIB for Phase I of the Reading Re-Imagined five-year, two-phase business plan to create a 'National Digital Hub'. This funding revitalized CNIB Library's technology infrastructure, and acquire and produce alternative format materials for people with print disabilities. Providing $3.21million in each of 3years, F2015-17, for Phase II will ensure equitable library service for people with print disabilities delivered through public libraries, and provide stability for the 'National Digital Hub' move from CNIB to a new not-for-profit.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

unknown

3 years

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

Economic Action Plan 2013 provided $3 million to CNIB in the 2013-14 budget under support for families and communities to update its technology and produce alternative format materials in braille, audio and e-text to assist Canadians who are blind or partially sighted develop literacy skills, access information and to improve their quality of life. The Government should remain committed to supporting Canadians with print disabilities. The funding requested will help this community receive access to equitable library service needed to increase educational and employment opportunities.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

An estimated 3 million Canadians have a print disability yet only 7% of published works are available in a format they can read. Section 32 of the Canadian Copyright Act defines a print disability as a disability that prevents or inhibits a person from reading a literary, musical or dramatic work in its original format, and includes disability resulting from: Severe or total impairment of sight; the inability to hold or manipulate a book; or Impairment relating to comprehension

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

For the 3 million Canadians with print disabilities, access to reading material in alternative formats: increases literacy; encourages life-long learning; and improves opportunities for employment and community engagement. Equitable access to information is a right of all Canadians and is a priority for the disability and library communities. The 2006 PALS study states the employment rate for Canadians who are blind or partial sighted is 35%. Increased access to digital information will increase academic and employment opportunities and improve quality of life.

Topic: Disabled persons

Recommendation 2: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

Today, CNIB Library's primary accessible audio book distribution media is CD. Over one million CDs are distributed by CNIB annually to its blind and partially sighted clients. This represents over two million pieces of mail. The Federal Government provides approximately $11 million per year to Canada Post to cover these mailing costs under its "Literature for the Blind" program.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

$500,000-999,999

1 year

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

Redirect part of the $11 million (est.) funding provided to Canada Post for the "Literature for the Blind" program based on the transition of CNIB Library clients from physical (CD) to digital distribution.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

The beneficiaries are Canadians with print disabilities. A digital delivery service will allow CNIB to download books to its library users nationwide within a day of request, more efficiently and more cost effectively than current CD (physical) delivery. For library users with computer access, books can be delivered directly to their computer, iPhone, Android and other wireless devices. For clients without access to, or unable to use, a computer, the library has developed direct-to-player download, equipped with Wi-Fi (or 3G/4G), which does not require a computer in the delivery channel.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

Reduces Government costs to support the "Literature for the Blind" program
Aligns with Canada's Digital Economy Strategy to accelerate adoption and use of digital technologies

Supports the Government's desire to 'reduce barriers and increase opportunities to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities in Canadian society' and to 'stimulate productivity and increase opportunities for innovation'

Topic: Please select from the pull-down menu

Recommendation 3: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

Please select from the drop down menu

Please select from the drop down menu

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

Please use this page if you wish to provide more explanation about your recommendation(s).

Recommendation 1

In a previous funding agreement with CNIB, the Government of Canada required that CNIB make “progress in support of the development of long-term funding and service arrangements with provinces/territories and other stakeholders for on-going accessible library services past March 31, 2012.”

CNIB has been working with the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) since June 2012 to envision a new national organization, removed from CNIB, which builds on the ‘National Digital Hub’ model originally proposed by CNIB – whose focus is the creation, collection, distribution, and preservation of alternative format works for Canadians living with print disabilities. The collections and services of the new organization will be available to Canadians through their public libraries and other service points. The service builds on the technology, production and distribution infrastructure and alternative format collections of CNIB, and the service expertise and priorities of local public libraries. Its funding model is based on a public/private partnership. It is anticipated by CNIB and CULC that the new organization will be established, April 2014. This funding proposal is to help support the operation of this new equitable library service model and in particular the new organization (referred to as the Hub) through its first three years of operations.

We have a solution to a long-standing goal of CNIB and consumer groups to provide equitable library services for Canadians with print disabilities through public libraries. This cost effective funding model will provide efficiencies and will allow the Government of Canada to provide the leadership and commitment that is integral to bringing our vision for fully accessible and equitable public library collections and services to reality for Canadians with print disabilities.

Recommendation 2

The international DAISY Consortium envisioned the DAISY Online Delivery Protocol as an alternative way to deliver reading material for persons with print disabilities. The Consortium brought together an international committee of subject experts to create an implementable standard (CNIB had a technical resource on this committee). This Online Delivery standard has been successfully piloted by CNIB with about 100 of its library users across Canada to assess client receptivity of digitally delivered books, and opportunity for cost savings. For the purposes of the pilot, client testers were provided with new Internet-ready audio player devices and Internet access.

*Please note that at least one recommendation must be provided