



MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

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| Date: | SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 – COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (1) |
| Title: | FAIR PRICING FOR CANADIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES |
| Submitted by: | COUNCILLOR MARILYN IAFRATE & COUNCILLOR SANDRA YEUNG RACCO |

Whereas, the City of Vaughan 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 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 the community, particularly given the contemporary rapid pace of digitization of educational and cultural materials.

It is therefore recommended that the City of Vaughan indicate its support for the Canadian Urban Libraries Council in its efforts to increase access to digital publications for library users in the City of Vaughan and across Canada; and

That the Federal government be called on to investigate the barriers faced by libraries in acquiring digital publications and the problems that poses for vulnerable demographic groups in Canada; and

That the Federal government take action to develop a solution that increases access to digital publications across Canada and assists libraries in meeting the cost requirements to acquire digital publications; and

That this resolution be forwarded to the three MPs for Vaughan and to the Canadian Urban Library Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Iafate
Councillor, Ward 1

Sandra Yeung Racco
Councillor, Ward 4

Attachments

Minutes of Library Board Meeting June 20, 2019 Item #8.1

NEW BUSINESS - AGENDA ITEM #8.1

CULC eBook PRICING INITIATIVE

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Board endorse the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) initiative advocating for fair pricing for purchase of eBooks and eAudio for Canadian Public Libraries,

AND THAT a resolution be forwarded to City of Vaughan Council for approval advocating for fair pricing for purchase of eBooks and eAudio for Canadian Public Libraries,

AND THAT a letter be forwarded to each City of Vaughan Member of Parliament advocating for fair pricing for purchase of eBooks and eAudio for Canadian Public Libraries.

BACKGROUND

Collections of public libraries in the 21st century are evolving and now contain significant collections of digital content including eBooks and eAudio. Vaughan Public Libraries has embraced this evolution and offers a vast collection of eBooks and eAudio to customers. The collection is continuously being refreshed as is every other collection of VPL. With the excessively high cost of eBooks and eAudio and restrictive licensing agreements, VPL has experienced challenges meeting customer needs and maintaining a robust eBook and eAudio collection.

When print books are purchased, VPL is awarded a discount of up to 41% off the suggested list price, however, there are no similar discounts offered for purchase of eBooks. Additionally, for Public Libraries in Canada the cost to purchase an eBook is frequently up to five times that applied to an average consumer, that is, publishers are charging Public Libraries a greatly inflated cost for the same eBook title available to any citizen at a much lower cost. This inflated cost to public libraries is due to the publishers attempting to control the use of eBook lending by public libraries. This issue exists only with the large five multinational publishers - Macmillan Publishing, Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, and Hachette Book Group. This is not the case for smaller Canadian publishers or niche presses.

Examples of inflated pricing would be Macmillan Publishing's author Louise Penny's newest book Kingdom of the Blind which is available to Canadian public libraries in paperback format for \$13, in hardcover format for \$22, and in digital format as an eBook for \$60. This same title can be purchased in eBook format by an individual for only \$16 from Amazon.ca. Similarly, Penguin Random House's author Linwood Barclay's A Noise Downstairs is available on Amazon.ca for purchase by individuals as an eBook for \$14 whereas Vaughan Public Libraries was charged \$57 for the eBook version. Another example from Penguin Random House is Michelle Obama's book Becoming whose hardcover cost is \$24 whereas VPL's cost to purchase an eBook is \$57 and an individual's cost to purchase the same eBook through Amazon.ca is \$18. Hachette Book Group is also guilty of inflating eBook prices including one of their current bestselling titles Upheaval: Turning Points for Nations in Crises by Jared Diamond. This eBook cost VPL \$114 whereas an individual can purchase the same eBook from Amazon.ca for \$22!

In addition to inflating prices, publishers often put limits or barriers on the eBooks they sell to libraries such as reducing the length of time a library will own the book or the number of circulations allowed before access to the digital content is denied. HarperCollins allows an eBook to only circulate 26 times before they remove it from library collections. Macmillan Publishing allows 52 uses or 24 months, whichever happens first, before the item is automatically deleted from a library's collection. Simon & Schuster allows libraries the use of a title for only 12 months before the titles disappears from the library collection and Penguin Random House titles are removed from public library collections after 2 years. Hachette does not impose borrowing or length of ownership limits on their works.

Not only are eBook prices for public libraries inflated, Public Libraries in Canada are now facing another challenge – lack of access to eAudio content. Some popular titles are not available for purchase by public libraries at any price or with any restrictions due to increasing restrictive licensing limitations. For example, Justin Trudeau’s book [A Common Ground: A Political Life](#), Margaret Atwood’s [A Handmaid’s Tale](#), and Jared Diamond’s [Upheaval](#) eAudio formats are not available for public libraries to purchase. Rather, they are accessible only through Audible, an online eAudio subscription service which is not available to public libraries, thus VPL cannot add these popular titles to our eAudio collections.

In summary the current situation with the five large multinational publishers is:

- eBooks are 2-3 times as expensive as print books
- eBooks sold to public libraries are up to 5 times as expensive as eBooks sold to individuals
- eBooks have a limited life span as dictated by the publisher
- eAudio are 2-3 times as expensive as audio books
- Some eAudio is not available for purchase by public libraries, only to subscribers

Vaughan Public Libraries has been involved in advocating for fair pricing for purchase of eBooks for Canadian public libraries for many years. In November 2015 the VPL Board registered their support by joining the coalition Canadian Libraries for Fair eBook Prices. Although some small improvements have been made, no lasting solutions were developed and the state of eBook purchasing for Canadian public libraries remains unacceptable. Now the challenge of lack of access to eAudio has emerged.

Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), which VPL is an active participant in, is embarking in June 2019 on a campaign advocating for a Canada-wide solution confirming fair pricing and access to purchasing of digital format materials for Canadian Public Libraries from the five large multinational publishers. The goal of this campaign is to build awareness of this situation and encourage support from public library boards, municipal councils and federal members of parliament/policy makers to seek a fair and reasonable resolution.

It is recommended that the VPL Board register their support for this CULC initiative continuing a leadership role in digital content advocacy and that the VPL Board direct the CEO to correspond with Vaughan’s MPs (Attachment 1) to advocate for their support in identifying a national solution. Further, it is recommended that our municipal leaders are encouraged to similarly approve a resolution (Attachment 2) advocating for removal of barriers for Canadian Public Libraries accessing digital publications.

Prepared by:
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Chief Executive Officer