



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

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PETITION NO.: **421-02324**

BY: **MR. CHOQUETTE (DRUMMOND)**

DATE: **MAY 4, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **STEVEN MACKINNON**

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Response by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Books**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

Public Services and Procurement Canada is responding to part 2 of the petition.

The Government of Canada is committed to promoting affordable and barrier-free access to books, which are the foundation of the knowledge economy and our intellectual and cultural life. Section 19 subparagraph (1)(g)(i) of the *Canada Post Corporation Act* provides for the free transmission by Canada Post of books and audiovisual material for the use of the visually impaired. Canada Post also offers a highly discounted postal rate for libraries to ship both print and audiovisual materials to their users and other libraries. The Library Materials Rate is enshrined in Section 19(1)(g.1) of the *Canada Post Corporation Act* and has existed since 1939. Since 2013 the subsidized Library Materials rate has been extended to cover not only printed materials (e.g., books, magazines, and records) but also audiovisual materials (e.g., CDs, DVDs and CD-ROMs).

The majority of Canadian libraries, including public libraries, university libraries, and libraries maintained by non-profit organizations, are eligible to send and receive library materials by mail at a highly discounted rate that is only a fraction of the delivery cost, or about 4.5% of the prevailing market price. For example, Canada Post's most discounted commercial parcel rate is \$29.00 for a 1.28-kg package whereas the Library Materials Rate for the same package is \$1.31 as of January 2018. It is important to note that Canada Post does not receive government compensation for delivering library materials at reduced rates and is expected to absorb

the losses itself. The rationales for subsidizing mailing library materials are to ensure equal access to knowledge for all Canadians regardless of their location. In fact, the Library Materials Rate is primarily used to ship books to rural libraries and rural library users.

Government assistance to publications delivery is not new. Since before Confederation, the Government offered a reduced rate (second-class mail) for newspapers and periodicals to encourage wider dissemination of information, increase access to Canadian culture, and ensure financial sustainability of the publishing industry. This subsidy program was motivated primarily by concerns for nation-building and equality in access to education and culture, because print publications delivered by mail were the most important source of information for many rural Canadians. This subsidy program was abolished in 1993 partially because digital technologies revolutionized the way information and knowledge is disseminated. Canadians now have better and cheaper ways to acquire the information and knowledge they need than relying on books and newspapers delivered to their house. Since then, this government subsidy program has been replaced by direct grants such as the Canada Book Fund and the Canada Periodical Fund, which are administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage with a focus on promoting Canadian cultural content.