



## The Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia (Books BC)

Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
on Budget 2024

Submitted June 14, 2023

The Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia (Books BC) thanks the committee for hearing our virtual presentation on June 12, 2023.

BC's independent publishers are the second largest English-language book publishing region in Canada, producing over 500 titles annually across all genres, supporting an ecosystem of educators, librarians, booksellers, and connecting readers of all ages to the exciting and diverse literary output of our province. As the voice of our region's independent book publishers, Books BC works to support the long-term health and success of the BC-owned book industry and to engage book-related communities in British Columbia, Canada, and beyond.

### Recommendation #1

**Books BC is grateful to the Province for renewing the BC Book Publishing Tax Credit for five years in Budget 2021. We ask that the Province again renew the BC Book Publishing Tax credit in 2026 and remove the sunset clause, as has been done for the Film and Television Tax Credit, to provide the same robust, long-term support to the industry.**

The BC Book Publishing Tax Credit is a critical support measure that allows publishers to make the large upfront investments required for the development of new books and to undertake the necessary adaptations to ensure their sustainability in a changed marketplace. For example, one of our local publishers Greystone Books, was able to launch a new children's publishing division in 2019, Greystone Kids. The significant financial investment required would not have been feasible otherwise. Greystone Kids has now published more than 30 books for children — garnering multiple best-book-of-the-year honours, dozens of starred reviews, a Governor General's Literary Award finalist nomination, on top of many other Canadian and international accolades. In a highly competitive marketplace, dominated by large multinationals, local, independent publishers rely on the stability that the tax credit provides to ensure their operations continue and are able to grow. This tax support has been effectively working for 20 years—we ask that it becomes a permanent and predictable, long-term support for BC publishers.

### Recommendation #2

**We ask that the Province, through the Ministry of Education, recommit to fairly remunerating creators and publishers by paying the royalty rate set by the Copyright Board for the licensing of their content and use of their copyrighted material in classrooms. This rate is \$2.41 per K-12 student, and should include payments from 2020 onwards.**

Up until 2012, the Government of BC agreed that BC authors and publishers deserved to be compensated for the cultural output they produce. However, over the last decade

BC's commitment to the principle of fair compensation has waned to the point that BC schools now freely use and photocopy sections or entire editions of BC-published books without providing any compensation to the creators of these works. Over the past decade, it is no coincidence that the overall GDP output of BC publishers has contracted and total jobs in the BC publishing sector have also declined. The health of our sector depends on addressing broadly defined fair dealing guidelines and recommitting to previous education budgets that included paying the royalty rate set by the Copyright Board for the use of publishers' copyrighted material in classrooms.

To add urgency to this issue, in recent months, Access Copyright has informed member organizations that it cannot continue to carry on in this role without urgently needed copyright reform. The crucial ongoing role of our collective licensing agency — collecting and distributing royalties owed by the education sector to publishers and creators — will be left unfulfilled. Effectively, member publishers, and the thousands of writers whose careers they nurture, will be left to administer each and every transaction when their copyright-protected material is used by an educational institution — if they are even informed of such use.

We urge the BC Ministry of Education to recommit to paying the royalty rate, which will ensure the survival of our long-standing licensing infrastructure and the investments of BC publishers to produce high-quality educational resources to support BC curriculum goals. The royalty rate of \$2.41/student is a straight annual rate based on student enrolment each year and allows teachers to copy material while ensuring that BC publishers and authors are compensated for their cultural output.

### **Recommendation # 3**

**We ask that the Province follow-up on its recommendation in the 2022 Budget Consultation report and commit to a three year program, valued at \$1.5 million, that incentivizes the purchase of BC books in public schools, and promotes the opportunity for BC students to see themselves reflected in their community stories.**

Regional voices and regional stories help students understand their place in the world, and empowers them to recognize the value of their own voices and stories.

We were pleased to see the 2022 Budget Consultation report include a recommendation to “create a program to incentivize the purchase of BC-published books in schools and libraries” (p. 26).

We are asking the BC government to now commit to such a program by providing a funding envelope of \$1.5 million over three years aimed at bolstering BC schools acquisition budgets for BC books, and support our Association's BC Books for BC Schools catalogue.

From the mid 1970's to 2001, the Ministry of Education supported the School Library Book Purchase Plan (SLBPP). Its purpose was twofold: to support BC schools by providing quality library books and to support the BC publishing industry. In 2001, the BC government announced that it was eliminating the SLBPP as part of its deficit reduction plan. The budget for the SLBPP at that time was approximately \$250,000.

Books BC believes that making BC books available to students in BC schools should be a government priority and we are asking that the government commit to a three-year program that incentivizes the purchase of BC books in the public school system, and promotes the opportunity for BC students to see themselves reflected in their community stories.

We suggest that this program offer BC schools a subsidy specifically reserved for the purchase of BC books, one that does not impact their already existing acquisition budgets. The program would be supported by our BC Books for BC Schools catalogue, where titles are selected and evaluated by teacher-librarians based on appropriateness for the BC curriculum, and Indigenous titles have an additional eligibility criteria around “authentic Indigenous voice.”

If this recommendation is supported, we are happy to work with government and BC schools on its implementation.

The BC publishing industry was born out of an urgent need to ensure our region’s stories were being told and our voices were part of the national conversation. Our three budget recommendations are directed at a need for sustainability for BC’s independent publishers, the fair compensation of their cultural output, and the creation of conditions that will allow them to continue to be resilient in the face of ongoing industry changes and challenges.

**For more information:**

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