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To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Councillor Shawna Stolte
c.c. Angela Morgan
Date: October 23, 2019
Re: Accessing E-Content Campaign

Motion:

WHEREAS, the City of Burlington 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 our community, particularly given the contemporary rapid pace of digitization of educational and cultural materials,

Now, there be it resolved that the City of Burlington do hereby:

1. Indicate our support for the Canadian Urban Libraries Council in its efforts to increase access to digital publications for library users in Burlington 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.

Background and Discussion:

Burlington Public Library is a member of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC). CULC is currently working with the government relations firm Temple Scott and Associates to increase awareness of the issues facing public libraries in Canada with regard to the provision of digital collections.

Members libraries of the CULC spend approximately \$100 million in public funds annually on library resources. Even with that significant expenditure, public libraries increasingly struggle to obtain e-content from multinational publishers, due to cost pressures and often-strict licensing limitations applied

to e-content. In order to properly service our communities, we need to ensure that we Canadians have access to e-content.

Publishers, primarily headquartered outside Canada, are limiting Canadian libraries' access to e-content, and, even when a publication is made available, are making it prohibitively expensive to acquire e-content. By way of example, Canadian author Louise Penny's book, *A Better Man*, is available to public libraries for \$22 in hard cover, for \$60 as an eBook, and for \$81.50 in eAudio. The \$60 ebook cost allows the book to be checked out electronically 52 times or for 2 years – whichever happens first. A paper edition would be expected to last 3 to 4 years at just over a third of the cost. Moreover, some titles, such as *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality* by Robert P.C. Joseph are currently not available to Canadian libraries in any eAudio format due to exclusive licensing models that prevent titles being offered for sale to public libraries. These restrictions and costs make it difficult for libraries to provide invaluable services that contribute to thriving and engaged communities. Barriers to libraries accessing e-content hamper our capacity to provide modern, digitized services to those demographic groups and to other public library users. This is exacerbated when some publications may only be available to us in digital forms.

This has been an issue for many years, but recently the problem has worsened with publishers further limiting access and embargoing content for public libraries. The resulting business model is financially unsustainable for libraries and detrimental to free and equitable access to information for the public. Public libraries and the programs that they provide are integral to developing proficient readers and ensuring that children succeed in school. Digital literacy programs also help ensure that citizens can contribute to our digital world.

Digital content has unique benefits that it allows community members who can't easily get to the library, such as seniors, low income families, youth, and new Canadians, to participate more fully in their communities.

This effort led by CULC includes three components: increasing public awareness through social media (<https://econtentforlibraries.org/>); requesting the support of municipalities and increase awareness amongst Federal candidates. Municipalities across Canada are indicating their support for CULC's campaign to increase e-content for public library users and public libraries across Canada by endorsing the campaign motion. To date, 15 municipalities have passed the motion including Toronto, Kitchener, Edmonton, Ottawa and Mississauga. The Burlington Public Library Board is requesting that Burlington City Council support this campaign by passing the draft motion provided.

Thank you,
Councillor Shawna Stolte
Ward 4