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Mayor signs statement to support Regina Public Library's fight for fair pricing and access to eBooks

Mayor Michael Fougere has joined over 90 other mayors and leaders across Canada and the U.S. in signing a [Statement on Equitable Public Access to eBooks](#).

Developed by the Urban Libraries Council and the Canadian Urban Libraries Council, the statement has been issued in response to Macmillan Publisher's embargo on eBook sales to libraries: libraries cannot purchase more than a single copy of new eBook titles from Macmillan for the first two months after the book's initial publication. This policy went into effect on November 1, 2019.

In 2019, Regina Public Library circulated eBooks about 150,000 times to Regina customers. Many of these books were new titles published by Macmillan and other eBook publishers. The popularity of borrowing free library eBooks continues to increase in Regina as the format becomes more popular and easier to access.

"Any embargo on library materials restricts the RPL's ability to serve our community," said Mayor Fougere. "More Regina residents are using the library every year, and demand for eBooks is growing extremely quickly. Limiting the library's access to materials means that our residents are unfairly prevented from having equal opportunities for education and entertainment."

The Macmillan embargo is the latest challenge libraries are facing from all of the "Big 5" publishers, including prices for libraries that are three to five times higher than the consumer price for the same title.

Despite books being in digital format, RPL is required to purchase several copies for its customers to use, just as it purchases many print copies of popular hard-copy books.

"Imagine having only a single print copy of a new and popular book at the library," Jeff Barber, RPL Director and CEO said. "This is what's happening with our eBooks. Not only do these changes limit our ability to provide access to these books, it's also costing us more to purchase these titles on behalf of our customers."

These restrictions are preventing libraries of all sizes from providing equitable access to digital learning opportunities, widening the digital divide and creating even greater obstacles for children, low-income families, people living with disabilities and other individuals who face unfair hurdles to accessing digital tools.

"Multinational publishers are price-gouging taxpayers and intensifying the gaps between the haves and have-nots in communities of all sizes with their restrictive licenses and excessively high prices," ULC President and CEO Susan Benton said. "Most concerning is the new eBook embargo imposed by

Macmillan Publishers, which results in an intentional erosion of digital equity by severely restricting e-book access for library patrons.”

“By signing the Statement on Equitable Public Access to E-Books, North America’s mayors and county executives are sending a powerful message they will not stand for the extreme restrictions e-book publishers are placing on public libraries, which limit/jeopardize their essential role as engines for democracy.”

Visit urbanlibraries.org for more information about the statement and the most up-to-date list of signatories.

About Urban Libraries Council

The Urban Libraries Council is an innovation and impact tank of North America’s leading public library systems. ULC drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships to elevate the power of libraries as essential, transformative institutions for the 21st-century. More than 150 urban member libraries in the U.S. and Canada rely on ULC to identify significant challenges facing today’s communities and provide new tools and techniques to help libraries achieve stronger outcomes in education, digital inclusion, workforce and economic development, and race and social equity.

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