

More Canada

Increasing Canadians' Awareness and Reading of Canadian Books

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Bookstores need post-Covid Ottawa help – industry experts

Independent bookstores across Canada should have a big part in the post-Covid recovery, according to a book industry think tank group.

In a report released today, bookstores are lauded for their significant role in promoting and selling Canadian-authored books, particularly those of local and regional authors

But they need help to get back on their feet. To strengthen existing stores, and encourage new ones, the report's key recommendation is that independent bookstores should get the same low Canada Post shipping rates now enjoyed by local public libraries. The Library Book Rate allows libraries to ship books for a very modest price.

"If independent bookstores could use the library book rate, they could grow their online sales and be effective competitors to Amazon," says Philip Cercone of McGill-Queens University Press, one of the report's authors. "They'd also be able to stock more books from smaller independent publishers," he adds. The report recommends that the library book rate also be made available to independent Canadian publishers.

The report, prepared in consultation with a dozen of the country's leading independent publishers, makes other recommendations for the Covid-19 recovery phase. They include:

- Government recognition of bookstores as a cultural industry, like film-making, magazine publishing, book publishing, and music
- Funding to help bookstore upgrade their marketing and expand their promotion of Canadian authors and books
- A sales bonus for bookstores on sales of independent publishers' Canadian authored books
- New measures to direct public dollars spent by libraries and schools to bookstores following a precedent already in place in Quebec

This report on independent bookstores follows one by the same group on chain bookselling, released in June. In that report, industry experts expressed concern about the Indigo chain of Indigo, Chapters and Coles stores. Indigo reported a major loss of \$185 million for the 12 months just before Covid shut down its stores. That report proposed that Ottawa recognize Indigo as a key cultural presence because of its role in retail bookselling, and provide immediate support in return for an agreement by Indigo to increase its display and stocking of Canadian authored books.

Both reports are available online at www.morecanada.ca.

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