



Continued federal funding supports accessible publishing

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The National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) is very pleased to announce the receipt of continued support from the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component (SDPP-D), a program designed to improve the social inclusion of people with disabilities. The additional funding of \$1 million will enable NNELS to continue to improve equity in access and service for Canadian readers with disabilities. The NNELS funding, which began in December 2017, has been awarded \$3 million to date and is scheduled for completion by March 2020.

"We gratefully acknowledge this support from the Government of Canada, and thank the partners and publishers for their enthusiastic participation in initiatives intended to move the bar towards an equitable and accessible reading environment for all in Canada."

Kevin Millsip, Executive Director, BC Libraries Cooperative, the service provider for NNELS.

"Our government recognizes that barriers to the built environment are not the only barriers that need to be addressed, as we work together to build a more accessible and inclusive Canada. Our Government's continued investment in accessible books through the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component is about working with the National Network for Equitable Library Service to increase the production and distribution of books in accessible formats so that more Canadians with print disabilities can take advantage of the resources that exist. It is also about making sure books are born accessible so that persons with print disabilities have better opportunities to read and learn. Canada is at its best and we all benefit when everyone has opportunities to participate on an equal basis."

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility

An estimated 760,000 to 1.5 million Canadians have a print disability, and this number is expected to grow with an aging population. Less than 10% of published materials are accessible to people with print disabilities. With the support of its partners, NNELS has undertaken key initiatives to increase quality employment opportunities for Canadians with print disabilities, to advance the agenda for born accessible publishing, and to grow its digital repository of accessible books.

NNELS' team of accessibility testers provide expertise in the areas of accessibility testing, analysis, software development, and report writing. The team educates and advises publishers, technology vendors, and public libraries on best practices for accessibility. The testers have

lived experience with a range of print disabilities, including blindness, low vision, and learning disabilities.

NNELS offers accessible publishing workshops and videos, accessibility ebook audits, and accessibility evaluations of library reading applications. NNELS organized the first national Accessible Publishing Summit in January 2019 that brought together key stakeholders and has received continued support to make this an ongoing annual event. For more information on NNELS' accessible publishing initiatives, please see www.accessiblepublishing.ca.

In the past year, NNELS has more than doubled its ebook and audiobook collection with an emphasis on Canadian content in both English and French. NNELS is also expanding its braille collections, and is researching best practices for braille creation and distribution through Canadian public libraries.

NNELS gratefully acknowledges the support of its funders from 8 provinces and territories (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, and Yukon), the support of libraries and readers, volunteers, and partner organisations, including the AEBC (Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians), CCB (Canadian Council of the Blind), CFB (Canadian Federation of the Blind), DAISY Consortium, eBOUND Canada and VIRN (Vision Impaired Resource Network), among others.

The National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) is a digital public library of downloadable titles for Canadians with perceptual disabilities, supported and fuelled by a growing network of readers, community organizations, librarians, publishers, and accessible format producers in Canada and abroad. NNELS is funded and supported by provincial and territorial governments, and is available to any public library user with a print-disability in Canada. Please visit nnels.ca for more information.

The BC Libraries Cooperative is a 200-member national cooperative, providing libraries and related organisations the services, cost savings, and support they need to do great work in Canadian communities. An enterprising non-profit and a technology leader, the Co-op is the proud home of NNELS. Please visit bc.libraries.coop for more information.

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