



This is the Time
Alberta Book Publishers Fund
October 1, 2017

This is the Time
A Renewed Proposal for an Alberta Book Publishers Fund

Book Publishers Association of Alberta
1 October, 2017

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Background

It is long past time for a provincial program of support that enables Alberta's book publishers to magnify their contribution to the economic and cultural life of our province.

Successive provincial governments have recognized the important impacts of Alberta's book publishing industry, its potential for growth, and the fact that it struggles on an uneven playing field, but they have then done little to change the situation. The process came closest to resolution in 2002-03, when after extensive research Alberta Community Development and the Book Publishers Association of Alberta agreed jointly on a proposal to Cabinet that, for reasons known only to the government of the day, was never funded. We renew that proposal now, and ask that it be included in the provincial budget for 2018-19.

A total of \$400,000 in provincial support in Alberta in 1993 fell to \$332,000 by 2004, and has since climbed to only \$775,352, only slightly more than keeping up with inflation.

Alberta's book publishers are confronted with a poor competitive position because of weak provincial support, and the industry has suffered serious setbacks in the last decade, just as the film industry did in the late 90s. Since 2004, following the failure of the last major effort to create an Alberta Book Publishers Fund, many accomplished Alberta publishers have relocated out of province or sold their assets out of the province, including Company's Coming, Red Deer Press, Lone Pine Publishing, Les Éditions Duval, Brindle & Glass, and Altitude Publishing.

Meanwhile, other provincial governments have recognized that book publishing is an essential but structurally difficult, low-margin enterprise and, other provincial governments have supported their book publishers to promote economic diversification as well as the unique heritage and cultures of their regions. Alberta book publishers' competitors in BC and Ontario benefit from open-ended programs of support through refundable tax credits, supplemented by granting

programs focused on specific priorities. Nova Scotia with its relatively tiny provincial budget found the means to increase its supports to publishers by a factor of seven times this year.

As a result, Alberta book publishers are stressed to the point where many have been forced to relocate to other jurisdictions, and all have missed important opportunities for growth. The proposed Alberta Book Publishers Fund will reverse this trend, securing for Alberta's future the economic, employment, cultural, and community benefits provided by the book publishing sector.

A Model for Building a Cultural Industry

The recent history of Alberta's film and television industry provides an important comparison. Crippled by the closure of the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation in 1996, the industry began to rebound several years later with the creation of a precursor to the Alberta Media Fund (AMF).

Fast-forwarding to the present, the AMF has contributed \$148 million to Alberta's film and television industry in the last five years alone, generating \$510 million in direct production expenditures.

The clear lesson is that the province's aggressive support of film and television producers (averaging more than 30 times that provided to book publishing over the same period) has enabled this industry to rise from the ashes and resume its role as an important contributor to Alberta's economy.

A similar success story can be expected for Alberta's book publishing industry, with the right support.

Over the past three years, since the creation of the Cultural Industries Branch, our members and our association have worked very closely with the Branch through consultations on the Cultural Industries Action Plan, participation in the economic impact assessment funded by the Ministry, ongoing discussions about the establishment of the Alberta Book Publishers Fund, and numerous other updates and discussions.

By providing funds to the BPAA and its members through the Cultural Industries Branch, the province indicated its recognition of, and interest in, broad cultural and economic goals for our sector, including but not restricted to specifically artistic goals. This move back to the AFA, with funding decisions subject to approval by the AFA board, seems to at least partially reverse this, and it appears to us to make the creation of an Alberta Book Publishers Fund much less possible. The retention of funding for film producers within the AMF signals more strongly than ever that the cultural industries policy is really a cultural industry policy, singular.

The Proposed Alberta Book Publishers Fund (ABPF)

We propose that the AMF begin to rebalance its support to Alberta's cultural industries by piloting an Alberta Book Publishers Fund, with an initial commitment of \$15 million rolled out over three years.

We propose a program with three components:

Component 1 will be a formula-based grant, designed for easy, transparent administration based on annual accountant-prepared financial statements. The formula would grant a percentage of eligible costs to participating book publishers, with a total-dollars ceiling per publisher. The percentage and ceiling would be determined by modeling eligible publishers' applications against the ABPF's budget allocation. This component could be weighted to enhance support to small and medium-sized publishers in critical stages of their development, and will in general offer crucial support to established, growing publishers.

Component 2 will be modeled on the current AMF's project grants, accessible to emerging and entry-level publishers.

Component 3 will be modeled on the current AMF's support to associations, enabling the continuing work of the Book Publishers Association of Alberta, which has served as critical infrastructure for Alberta's book publishers.

Expected Benefits of the ABPF

The proposed ABPF will allow Alberta's book publishers to commit to expanded publishing programs, employ more talented Albertans, and build the volume of their exports. These initiatives will strengthen an Alberta-based industry and increase accessibility to Alberta writers, educators, academics, artists, and other creative professionals, ensuring that Albertans and their work are better known—and that they capture new audiences—outside of Alberta.

The record of Alberta's book publishers shows that they are successful and persistent contributors to Alberta community and economy when the competitive playing field is level.

In 2015, Alberta's book publishers participated in a Ministry funded study of their economic impacts, the results of which have not yet been released. Based on our current understanding of those results, we predict that the expected benefits of an ABPF over three years will be dramatic:

- doubled sales volume
- doubled export earnings

- 50 percent increase in direct employment
- increased direct provincial tax revenues
- doubled induced economic benefits
- 50 percent more titles published
- more Alberta authors published
- more Alberta creative contractors hired (writers, editors, designers, educators, illustrators, photographers, indexers)
- improved contributions to education, higher education, tourism, retail, and local economies that will not come from out-of-province publishers
- furthering the Government of Alberta's own strategic goals of economic diversification and creating employment for all Albertans
- consolidation of stable, long-term Alberta companies.

When the program is renewed following the pilot term, the longer-term benefits will most certainly include growing Alberta's book publishing industry to a level in Canada proportional to Alberta's population. Alberta's publishing industry now contributes roughly 1.6 percent of Canada's book publishing sales volume. Alberta should contribute closer to 12 percent of Canada's book sales, proportional to its population. With appropriate and proportional support, Alberta's book publishers intend to achieve that goal within the next decade.

Alberta still can claim a strong and active regional book publishing industry. With the prompt delivery of a stronger program of provincial support, the Alberta book publishing industry will grow from its current base.

Book Publishing in Brief

Books—whether delivered in digital or print form—have a unique and essential role among media: they are authoritative, durable, long-form, prestigious, and influential in ways that other media are not.

After more than a decade of worldwide challenges in professional book publishing, book audiences and markets have strengthened in recent years. Books are literally here to stay, and Alberta's book publishers remain an essential component of a mature province's cultural industry sector.

The book publishing industry punches well above its weight, delivering cultural influence and impact literally unavailable through other media, educational supports that are completely unavailable from non-Albertan publishers or suppliers, and significant economic impacts.

Professional book publishing is a knowledge-based, value-added enterprise that provides employment for writers, researchers, editors, artists, photographers, graphic designers, scientists, educators, and other creative professionals.

Often confused with printers, book publishers are more analogous to film producers: they assemble creative teams, finance and manage complex projects, develop cultural and information products, and bring those products to their largest possible audiences.

Book publishers are typically long-lived, stable companies built on product sales rather than speculative investment. They are twenty-first-century, cultural enterprises offering stable employment to well-trained, highly skilled Albertans.

Alberta publishers are innovative. Alberta's book publishers have been early adopters of digital technologies, beginning with digital design and production tools, and now including ebooks, apps, online sales and marketing, and reaching customers through e-retailing. While print still accounts for more than 70 percent of all book sales throughout North America, Alberta book publishers have dedicated themselves to serving their audiences in whatever media those audiences prefer. More than 95 percent of Alberta's book publishers published digital content over the last year.

Alignment to Government of Alberta Priorities

Ongoing work by the Government of Alberta on an action plan for cultural industries has so far not resulted in a publicly available plan or document, however, the proposed Alberta Book Publishers Fund is completely consistent with the plans and values of the Government of Alberta, as we understand them.

Supporting an increase to the funding for book publishers would support the Government of Alberta's strategic goal of diversifying the economy and creating jobs for all Albertans.

Alberta writers and other creative professionals would not have the same opportunities without a book publishing industry based in this province.

The work created for these professionals by Alberta book publishers helps keep them in the province, helping to maintain a pool of skilled and literate talent for all creative industries. Strengthening the infrastructure of the book publishing sector benefits Alberta authors, readers, illustrators, schools, universities, designers, printers, retailers, and tourism-related industries.

A mature and confident community expresses itself to the world, rather than leaving it to others to speak for it. Our province's book publishers are operated by Albertans with longstanding commitments to the development and dissemination of regional voices, including Indigenous voices.

Alberta book publishers bring Alberta perspectives and priorities to education, both through publishing school resources, and through publishing creative works that supplement instructional resources and circulate in library collections.

Publishers extend the research and teaching missions of Alberta's universities, participating in a worldwide network of university presses dedicated to the publication of peer-reviewed works that improve, preserve, and extend the reach of research scholars.

Alberta publishers aggressively engage in export markets, extending Alberta's economic and cultural reach, and exporting Alberta's stories, expertise, and values. They bring talented Albertans to national and international audiences, generating both influence and export revenues.

Timing

Since the unsuccessful attempt to initiate an ABPF in the early years of this century, we have watched what should have been a decade of opportunity in Alberta's book publishing industry unfold in real time as a decade of reverses and lost companies.

With genuine respect for the fiscal challenges facing the Government of Alberta, the time for the proposed ABPF is now. Our industry has the critical mass now to embrace new opportunities and grow, but without renewal it will continue to lose expertise, sales volume, and entire companies.

For more than two decades, our conversation with the Government of Alberta has been positive but inconclusive: yes, we should do this, but now is not the right time. In good times, we were told that bad times are coming. In bad times, we were told there is no money available.

Yet during this same period, we have seen support for the film and television industry grow exponentially, through good times and bad. We recognize from the success of support given to Alberta's film and television industry that public investment at the scale we propose is available. That support can have massive impacts, and those impacts take time to manifest; in other words, it is possible, smart, and urgent to act now.

The Government of Alberta's support for cultural industries is now expressed overwhelmingly as support for film and television production, proving the benefits of aggressive promotion of a cultural industry. All the while the approach has failed Alberta's book publishers, and therefore failed the many Albertans involved in the arts, education, retail, tourism and other sectors that benefit from Alberta-based book publishing. It has also robbed many others outside our province of the opportunity to gain a new understanding of and respect for Alberta through Alberta-published books.

The structure of the support offered to the film and television industry through the AMF required a one-time “top-up” in the 2016/2017 provincial budget which alone amounted to more than \$11 million: more than enough to fund the first two full years of the proposed Alberta Book Publishers Fund. If necessary, this may be the envelope from which to draw the funds needed to support the proposed program.

While there will never be an easy time for the Government of Alberta to take this step, we have, in this era of change in our province, a chance to fix this imbalance now and to release the pent-up power of Alberta’s books.

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Appendix A
Provincial Funding Table

Province	Tax Credit (\$)	Grants (\$)	Total Investment (\$)	% of Canadian Population ¹	% Canadian Book Publishing
Alberta	0	775,352	775,352	12	1.6
British Columbia	3,200,000	600,000	3,800,000	13	3.0
Manitoba	500,000	398,200	898,200	4	Less than 1%
Ontario	0	3,609,473	3,609,473	39	65.7
Quebec	82,943	5,430,566	5,513,509	23	28.5
Saskatchewan	0	527,198	527,198	3	Less than 1%
Nova Scotia	0	1,100,000	1,100,000*	2	Less than 1%
Newfoundland	0	200,000	200,000	2	Less than 1%
PEI	0	17,000	17,000	0 (0.4)	Less than 1%
New Brunswick	0	300,000	300,000	2	Less than 1%

*As of October 2016 prior to this it was \$170,000.

¹ StatCan 2015 Statistics (rounded to the nearest percent)

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Appendix B
Alberta Publishers List

Publisher	City	Genre(s)
Athabasca University Press	Edmonton	Academic
Banff Centre Press	Banff	Literary, Arts
Bayeaux Arts	Calgary	Literary
Blue Bike Books	Edmonton	Trivia
Broadview Press	Calgary	Academic
Brush Education Ltd.	Edmonton	Educational
Dragon Hill Publishing	Edmonton	Niche History, Fiction
Durvile Publications Ltd.	Calgary	Non Fiction
Eschia Books Inc.	Edmonton	Indigenous Fiction
Folklore Publishing	Edmonton	History and Humour
Freehand Books	Calgary	General
Frontenac House Ltd.	Calgary	Poetry, Fiction, General
Grass Roots Press	Edmonton	Educational, English as a Second Language
Great Escapes Publications	Leduc	Fiction, Mystery
Hades Publications	Calgary	Speculative Fiction
Hingston & Olsen Publishing	Edmonton	Literary
Junior Global Citizen Club	Edmonton	Childrens
Kingsley Publishing Services	Cochrane	Publishing Services
Laksa Media Groups Inc.	Calgary	Literary
Leslie Vermeer	Edmonton	Publishing Services
Lone Pine Publishing	Edmonton	Nature Guides, Gardening, Ghost Stories
Mount Makivka Publishing Ltd.	Edmonton	Literary, History
NeWest Press	Edmonton	Literary, Poetry, General
Renegade Arts Canmore Ltd.	Canmore	Graphic Novels, Comics
Roadie Books	Edmonton	Historical Fiction
Rocky Mountain Books	Calgary	Travel, Photography, General
Stonehouse Publishing	Edmonton	Literary
The Historical Society of Alberta	Calgary	Historical Non-Fiction
Tyche Books Ltd.	Calgary	Speculative Fiction
University of Alberta Press	Edmonton	Academic, Literary, Poetry
University of Calgary Press	Calgary	Academic