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November 25, 2004

The Honourable Liza Frulla
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women
15 Eddy Street
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0M5

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Public Library Board to convey our strong concerns over the Government's intention to proceed with narrowly focused amendments to The Copyright Act. The Toronto Public Library Board requests that you speak at the Cabinet table, in the Liberal caucus and in the House of Commons on the importance of balanced copyright reform which recognizes user rights. We urge you and your colleagues to resist entertainment industry pressure to address their narrow issues in new legislation without acknowledging the necessity of preserving user rights to access information. The broad societal implications of copyright reform must be carefully considered at this time.

The May 2005 Interim Report, recently reintroduced by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, is an unbalanced document which, if implemented, will:

- lower the privacy, freedom of speech and consumer rights of individual Canadians;
- increase operating costs for Canada's schools, colleges, universities, public libraries and archives;
- decrease the ability of small and medium-sized business to innovate; and
- result in the outflow of tens of millions of dollars in fees to foreign content providers, fees which often need not have to be paid by schools and libraries to the same content providers in their own country.

A legislative balance which promotes user rights, as eloquently articulated by the unanimous Supreme Court copyright decision in March, is essential so that Canadians can fully participate in the evolving Internet delivery of information and cultural expression.

Library Board

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This issue touches the lives of millions of Canadians and the libraries and education institutions which serve them. At present, Canada's copyright regime is more restrictive than those in the rest of the developed English speaking world with regard to the rights of libraries and schools to provide copyrighted content to their users. If the Heritage Standing Committee proposals are implemented, this inequity will be increased at the expense of library and school budgets and the ability of citizens to do research and access cultural content. It is our hope that you will act and speak on their behalf in calling for reconsideration of the limited legislative agenda currently being considered.

I will be delighted to provide you with more information on this complex issue, should you wish. Representatives of Toronto Public Library will be pleased to meet with you in your constituency office to discuss our proposals for balanced legislative reform. In addition, arrangements can be made to have representatives from the broader library community meet with you in Ottawa. Please let me know if I can be of assistance, and thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Mason
Chair
Toronto Public Library Board