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January 22, 2014

Dr. Patricia Demers, Chair, Expert Panel
c/o The Royal Society of Canada
Walter House
282 Somerset West
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0J6

Dear Dr. Demers:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a brief on the status and future of Canada's libraries and archives. The attached brief addresses the framing questions outlined in the call for participation by the Royal Society Expert Panel.

Further to this submission, I would like to take the opportunity to address item 3 of the Expert Panel's Mandate; specifically, to identify the necessary changes in resources, structures, and competencies to ensure libraries and archives serve the Canadian public good in the 21st century. Now more than ever, the profession needs strong library leadership and advocacy at the national level. Because of their federal funding and national mandate, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is best positioned to take on the role of connecting, supporting, promoting, and advancing libraries across Canada.

Within the profession we need LAC to be an advocate for libraries in the face of cuts to federal government, public, and school libraries in various jurisdictions. We need a national body, with a broader mandate than the Canadian Library Association, to be a clearinghouse and source of reliable and comparable data that supports the advocacy work of individual libraries, and helps us to effectively tell our stories.

To be seen by the broader community as a good steward of the resources entrusted to them, LAC must identify and develop partnerships amongst the communities involved in the acquisition, preservation, and diffusion of knowledge, maximizing service reach and impact while minimizing costs. Services for Canadians with print disabilities, for instance, are an area where LAC should have taken on a leadership role. Since public libraries are primarily funded - and disproportionately at that - by the municipalities they serve and are often located in small remote communities, the capacity for public libraries to successfully collaborate to offer consortial services is limited without national leadership. Ideally, if LAC serves as a source of enduring knowledge accessible to all, they should be able to oversee equitable library services for all Canadians, including those with print disabilities.

I would like to extend my appreciation to you and your fellow expert panelists for your care and critical attention in compiling this important report. May you be successful in achieving your mandate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Janet Hutchinson'.

Janet Hutchinson
Board Chair
Calgary Public Library

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ellen G. Humphrey'.

Ellen G. Humphrey
Interim CEO
Calgary Public Library

Enclosure: 1