

For Immediate Release

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Public Access to Information Threatened by Copyright Inaction

Ottawa, Ontario, July 19, 2001 - President Margaret Law has expressed the Canadian Library Association's concern about the lack of balance between the rights of users and creators as shown in the Government of Canada's recently announced digital copyright reform agenda.

She stated, "Canada's copyright legislation must provide fundamental rights to Canadian citizens to allow them to access information for research and private study. If not, these rights, which are taken for granted in the print on paper world, may disappear." These rights include the right of individuals to access materials for reading, entertainment or research and are essential to an informed and participatory society.

By arguing for reasonable use of and access to copyrighted materials, Canadian libraries are continuing their long-standing tradition of supporting creators and publishers. Libraries are, however, concerned that the current copyright reforms may strengthen the protection given to creators and publishers with no consideration for the needs of learners and their institutions such as libraries, K-12 educational institutions, colleges and universities, archives and museums.

Karen Adams, CLA's Copyright Committee Chair, emphasized that the government must also broaden the issues which it is considering under the current reforms. "For example, it is important that the Government of Canada recognize that content made available on the web should be covered by copyright exceptions which permit use for research, private study and reproduction for preservation purposes."

Libraries are also concerned that contract law can override rights currently available to individuals and institutions, including not-for-profit lending. President Law stated: "by failing to recognize this the Government is ignoring a situation that endangers the very existence of libraries in this country."

The Canadian Library Association, which represents the more than 21,000 libraries in every community and educational institution in Canada, will make its views known to the Government of Canada in the upcoming consultation on digital copyright reform.

The CLA Response to the Consultation Paper on Digital Copyright Issues has been submitted.

For more information on CLA's position on copyright contact:

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