

8 April 2013

The Right Honourable James Moore
Minister of Canadian Heritage
and Official Languages
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
james.moore@pch.gc.ca

Dear Minister Moore,

Re: Reduction of the mandate and services of Library & Archives Canada

The **Resource Group on Libraries of the Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada** (RGL-AFMC), would like to protest strongly the recent changes and reductions to the mandate and services at Library and Archives Canada (LAC). As directors of the health and medical science libraries of the 17 universities which have medical schools in Canada we understand and uphold the importance of well-developed library services and collections to support scholarly communication which ultimately engenders the development of new knowledge.

Our concern about the recent reductions of LAC's mandate and services, particularly following on similar reductions at NRC and the Canadian Institute for Scientific and Technical Information of Canada (CISTI) which the Board of Directors, AFMC protested in their press release of 28 May 2009, are cause for considerable concern to the academic and scholarly communities in Canada and indeed to all Canadian citizens. The carving out of LAC is particularly egregious as it represents the federal government's severe neglect of Canadian heritage which will affect new scholarship about Canada in the generations to come. No other institutions in the country, universities included, are appropriately mandated, positioned or funded to protect the cultural heritage of our country. The recent cutbacks to the services provided by LAC represent a de facto abdication of its responsibility to do so.

To develop effective policies in all realms politicians, citizens, academics, scientists and scholars require a robust information environment which provides the ability to look back at history for a full account of what has transpired as well as the evidence to make appropriate and informed decisions. As a recent paper, "Accessing availability of scientific journals, databases, and health library services in Canadian Health Ministries" (Leon G et al, 2013) points out, "There is inequity in availability of peer-reviewed research in the fourteen Canadian health ministries. This inequity could present a problem, as each province and territory is responsible for formulating and implementing evidence-informed health policies and services for the benefit of its population." (1). Without access to its history as collected and preserved by LAC, a similar deficiency will occur in other disciplines beyond the sciences which will adversely affect Canadian public policy for the future.

We are also dismayed that a restrictive new "Code of Conduct" has been imposed upon the staff of the Library

and Archives Canada. This includes “teaching, speaking at conference and other personal engagements” as behaviours considered high-risk for conflict of interest or conflict with the employees’ duty of loyalty to the government. Librarians like scientists have long been called upon for their expert opinion and have served society by providing useful information and, when necessary, speaking truth to power. To discourage their doing so weakens our society rather than encouraging a strong, multi-opinioned and healthy dialogue among academics, scholars and citizens required for a hearty democracy.

We join several other organizations, including the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the Canadian Library Association (CLA), the Health Science Information Consortium of Toronto, and the Writers’ Union of Canada in denouncing the reductions to the mandate and services at LAC, and urge LAC to reconsider and rewrite their Code of Conduct.

Sincerely,

Sandra Langlands

Chair, Resource Group on Libraries, AFMC and

Acting Director, Science Libraries / Director, Gerstein Science Information Centre, University of Toronto

1. Leon G, Ouimet M, et al. Accessing availability of scientific journals, databases, and health library services in Canadian Health Ministries” **Implementation Science** 2013, 8:34 doi:10.1186/1748-5908-8-34 <http://www.implementationscience.com/content/8/34> [Accessed: 24March2013]

Cc:

- Daniel J. Caron, Deputy Head and Librarian and Archivist of Canada danielj.caron@bac-lac.gc.ca
- Irving Gold, Vice President, Government Relations and External Affairs, Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC)
- Susan Powelson, Secretary, Resource Group on Libraries, AFMC