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Manitoba Library Association

April 23rd, 2009

Honorable Nancy Allan
Minister of Labour and Immigration
317 - 450 Broadway,
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister:

We write on behalf of the Manitoba Library Association (MLA). The MLA provides leadership in the promotion, development and support of library and information services in Manitoba for the benefit of MLA members, the library and information community and the citizens of Manitoba. As such, we would like to draw your attention to the fact of libraries' near complete omission in the recently released *Manitoba My New Home. Living In Manitoba. A Resource Guide for Immigrant Women*.

While your Ministry should be congratulated on its production of the *Guide*, the omission of libraries as a foundational resource for immigrant women can only be characterized as a gross oversight. In a document of 109 pages libraries received three brief mentions as resources for "meal planning", DVDs and "children's reading circles," and as offering volunteer opportunities.

In actual fact libraries offer much more to new immigrant women. They provide support for English language learning, employment searches, career reaccréditation, continuing education and early childhood literacy, all of which take place within settings that provide opportunities for individuals to become socialized as Manitobans. A comprehensive resource document for immigrant women would describe libraries' offerings within categories such as language training, employment, education, children/families and recreation.

The MLA recently sent a query via our listserv regarding Manitoba libraries' interaction with immigrant women and their families. Libraries throughout the province, ranging from small, public rural libraries to university libraries to the library at the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, responded. The responses revealed that libraries of all kinds are indeed reaching out to and serving new immigrant women – whether by hosting English conversation groups, offering English-as-an-Additional language and multilingual materials, carrying dual language children's books, providing access to multilingual pamphlets about addiction or offering a range of free programs, including basic computer training.

All of these offerings are in addition to what libraries have always provided: namely, free access to information and trained professionals eager to connect individuals with the particular pieces of information they require, whether in order to advance an educational goal, support parenting, or simply to have some fun. Libraries serve the whole individual across their lifetime, a message that unfortunately was not conveyed in the *Guide*.

**Promoting public awareness of library
services and library issues in Manitoba**

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The MLA believes that the *Guide* constitutes an important resource for immigrant women and related practitioners. We are proud that it is a Canadian first and we are eager to see it become a truly comprehensive document. We welcome the opportunity to assist the Ministry on a consultative basis with a revision or supplement. Please have the appropriate staff be in touch with Director of Advocacy, Monique Woroniak, as required.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Signed:

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