



To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries

March 23, 2012

The Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Education
Province of British Columbia
Room 310
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Abbott,

The BC Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) represents more than 700 public library trustees on 77 library, library association and library federation boards across the province. Consistent with the BC Library Act, these volunteers are responsible for the annual budgets of their respective libraries, which provide a range of community and literacy services to more than 99% of the population in British Columbia.

The BCLTA, on behalf of our membership, is concerned about the long-term financial health of public libraries in this province. In particular, we are concerned about your ministry's decision to subsume the \$14 million provincial library budget line item into the overall education budget. This action appears to be at odds with your government's stated goals of accountability and transparency.

It has created uncertainty about future provincial library support. Although we are encouraged by your ministry's verbal commitment to maintain this level of funding for the next three years, the lack of a separate line item for library funding makes future funding much more tenuous.

British Columbia has maintained one of the best library systems in Canada due to the hard work and diligence of a partnership which includes the Government, the municipalities and regional districts, the staff and volunteers of the libraries and the electorate.

We ask that you keep this partnership strong while demonstrating the Government's ongoing commitment to literacy by reinstating the budget line item that clearly identifies your ministry's commitment to financially supporting libraries in British Columbia.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully yours,

Paul Tutsch
Vice President

Cc: Paige MacFarlane, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
Jacqueline van Dyk, Director, Libraries and Literacy Branch, Ministry of Education

Some Valuable Facts *

British Columbia libraries offer service from 243 branches in almost 400 B.C. communities — that's 99% of the B.C. population!

In 2010 we:

- ✓ Received over 56 million visits
- ✓ Circulated almost 57 million items
- ✓ Supported over 1 million people directly through library programs
- ✓ Delivered outreach programming in 94% of our branches
- ✓ Participated in approximately 80% of the 100 + literacy task groups around the province
- ✓ Contributed almost \$200M to B.C.'s economy

* BC Ministry of Education data, 2011