

**A Report to the Honourable George Abbott**  
**Minister Of Community, Aboriginal And Women's Services**  
**Province of British Columbia**

**A Response to the Strategic Directions Document**  
**Interim Situation Assessment**  
**Provincial Strategic Planning Process for Public Libraries**



**Respectfully submitted by the BC Library Trustees Association**  
**November 28, 2003**

## INTENT OF THE SURVEY

The BCLTA Board of Directors identified five major themes inherent in the document entitled: "Developing a Draft Strategic Plan For Libraries - Situation Assessment" (April, 2003). The survey was designed to give each library board an opportunity to reach consensus on the importance of these themes, i.e. on these stated strategic directions. BCLTA believes this information will be helpful to the Province in developing the final strategic plan for library service. An opportunity was also provided in the survey for library boards to recommend other improvements that would enhance library services in the Province of British Columbia.

## PROCESS

The Survey was distributed to BC Library Board Chairs with an accompanying letter from the President of BCLTA. Boards were requested to reach consensus, to complete the survey and to return the form to BCLTA prior to November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003. The results were tabulated to reflect the views of current library trustees as expressed through the corporate voice of their respective Boards.

## BOARDS PARTICIPATING IN THE SURVEY

### Boards responding to the survey included:

Beaver Valley Public Library	Nakusp Public Library
Bowen Island Public Library	Nelson Municipal Library Board
Burnaby Public Library Board	Okanagan Regional Library
Chetwynd Public Library	North Vancouver District Public Library
Coquitlam Public Library	Penticton Public Library Board
Creston Public Library Association	Powell River Library Board
Fort St. James Library Board	Prince George Public Library
Granisle Public Library	Richmond Public Library
Greater Victoria Public Library	Sechelt Public Library Association
Greenwood Public Library Association	Surrey Public Library
Hazelton District Public Library	Squamish Public Library
Houston Public Library Association	Terrace Public Library
Hudson's Hope Public Library	Thompson - Nicola Regional District Board
Kaslo and District Public Library Association	Trail and District Public Library
Kimberley Public Library	West Vancouver Memorial Library
Kitimat Public Library	Whistler Public Library
Midway Public Library	Valemount Public Library

## RESULTS

### RESPONSES TO THE FIVE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Percentages reflect the level of importance library boards place on each strategic direction. Please note high, medium and low scales refer to degree of importance.

#### 1. CHANGING ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Expecting libraries to adopt new roles such as technology training, access to electronic information and the Internet and working with school libraries and government agencies.

**HIGH 71%**

**MEDIUM 26%**

**LOW 3%**

#### 2. INCREASING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

Finding opportunities for public libraries and other public sector organizations to work together in the licensing of commercial online database subscriptions to receive more favourable purchase terms and to create more uniform service levels across the province.

**HIGH 47%**

**MEDIUM 41%**

**LOW 12%**

#### 3. MODIFYING THE EXISTING GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Mandating public library governance under the authority of a regional district to offer a new option for establishment of a regional library service for the entire area, which the library serves within the regional district.

**HIGH 15%**

**MEDIUM 17%**

**LOW 68%**

#### 4. OPEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Ensuring basic library services are accessible to everyone in the area served by the library without payment of a user fee, and government funding generated from taxes to cover most of the cost of providing the service.

**HIGH 97%**

**MEDIUM 3%**

**LOW 0%**

#### 5. PERFORMANCE BASED FUNDING

Using provincial performance based (conditional) funding to encourage public libraries to meet broader provincial goals, thereby augmenting the established role that unconditional funding plays in supporting provision of basic library services.

**HIGH 6%**

**MEDIUM 30%**

**LOW 64%**

#### PRIORITY LISTING OF ISSUES

Based on the survey the following strategic directions are ranked in order of importance from top to low priority. Please note: numbers reflect relative inferences. Numerical values were determined by awarding 3 points for High, 2 points for Medium, and 1 point for Low levels of importance.

1. Open access to public libraries (101)
2. Changing role of public libraries (91)
3. Increasing operational efficiencies of public libraries (80)
4. Modifying the existing governance framework (50)
5. Performance based funding (47)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Library Boards were asked to respond to the question: “If our library board was able to make one change for public library service, it would be.” Actual responses included:

- Assurance of future funding to meet projected planning to achieve service goals, especially in smaller rural libraries.
- More government support.
- Provincial Government support for infrastructure (buildings, desks, chairs, furniture, computers).
- More consideration for small rural libraries and the unique problems (money) and situations that occur. e.g. lack of ability to be open more hours etc. So many initiatives and programs seem to apply only to large libraries.
- To ensure legislation permits library boards to provide leadership in an entrepreneurial environment, including the pursuit of alternate sources of revenue and the broadening of the definition of entities with which public libraries could contract to provide services.
- An expanded role for the Provincial Government regarding funding and acquisition of resources similar to the provision of Legalese.
- Increase the per capita funding provided by the province to a level equal to Alberta or Saskatchewan.
- Provincial library card.
- To maintain and encourage the continued support of public library associations.
- Increased funding to cover extra librarian hours to enable our library to be open more than 4 days a week. We are such a “Hub” that we really need to be open 7 days a week!
- To increase core funding from province for libraries in smaller communities, including yearly COLA increases.
- Protect the rural libraries so that they have a sense of security and permanence. Governments (Municipal and Provincial) should provide this through consistent and established funding. Then libraries can concentrate on serving customers - not worrying about finances.
- Higher per capita grant from the Province.
- That the Provincial Government continues to fund public libraries and increase that funding to meet the growing public demand for services not currently offered.
- Consistent standards and funding throughout the province.
- That our library maintains its ability to serve our community independent of provincial uniformity.
- Basic library service needs to continue to be free, i.e. funded by general revenue as opposed to be paid for through user fees.

- Give higher funding to both public and school libraries than is currently in place.
- Consistent funding to support computer access for public (CAP funding).
- Increased funding for materials/ increased book inventory.
- To allow individual community libraries to respond to their own communities specific needs.
- The Province to provide incentive funding to improve library infrastructure such as buildings, technology, automated circulation systems and create permissive environment to encourage libraries to seek out other sources of revenue through marketing, in-house expertise and services and products developed by individual libraries or consortiums.
- Better funding for small libraries.
- Support Public Library Services Branch in planning for better internet infrastructure and province - wide resource sharing, addressing access issues, and supporting literacy through early childhood reading programs in public library settings.
- Need more funding and resources to provide the high performance in library service, if we wish to make any changes. Please reconsider our resource and training support. Automation of processing wherever personal service/handling by staff not necessary. To allow libraries to access much needed funding like Casino Funds or more Government grants.
- Desire more secure funding, specifically from the Province, which would in turn lead to greater accessibility for all British Columbians.
- Predictable stable funding.
- Performance based funding would have to be looked at on an area/population ratio in rural versus urban environment, increased training of patrons in their areas of interest.
- Ways to increase tax based funding to ensure sufficient funding to meet community demands and operational efficiency. Should everyone pay a library tax as they do an education tax?
- Increase municipal and provincial spending to allow us to provide more hours and better service to patrons.
- Survey the public on their perception of library services; provide larger per capita grants (unconditionally) to all library boards.
- Stable funding for libraries.

The British Columbia Library Trustees Association is pleased to forward the results of this survey to the Honourable Minister George Abbott for his due consideration. The BCLTA looks forward to meeting with the Minister to further discuss our findings.