



British Columbia
Library Association

June 26, 2009

The Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045,
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

On behalf of the British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) and my fellow Board members, I would like to congratulate you on your recent election to the Provincial Legislature and appointment to Cabinet. We look forward to developing a productive working relationship with you and your office in the years to come.

BCLA represents over 700 library staff from all types of libraries, predominantly public and academic. One of the purposes of the Association is to promote and foster the role of libraries and library workers in British Columbia through advocacy, education and leadership. A key aspect of this purpose is to make sure that the role libraries play in policy issues ranging from literacy, to intellectual property, to copyright, to intellectual freedom is communicated to the appropriate level of government. BCLA has a long history of advocating for the public's rights in these areas.

Beyond this, however, the work of the Association is to be pro-active in reminding tax payers, funders and all levels of government that libraries are cultural *and* economic community assets. We all benefit from the investments made in an educated and highly skilled workforce that has sufficient and free access to information, research and scholarship of all kinds—and to highly skilled library staff to guide and teach. Research clearly shows tangible returns on the investments made in libraries. In challenging economic times, even more demand is placed on libraries. British Columbians are using BC's public libraries in ever greater numbers as resource centres for career and retraining information, and for access to the Web.

During an economic downturn, all aspects of government funding come under scrutiny. I strongly believe that the investment your Ministry makes in libraries returns far greater value than the costs and urge you to continue funding at the current levels. Indeed I would urge your Ministry to consider the actions of the Alberta provincial government that recently increased funding to libraries despite the tough financial times we are all experiencing.

As you may know, BCLA, along with the BC Library Trustees' Association, the Association of BC Public Library Directors and the Union of BC Municipalities, are hoping to meet with you and Premier Campbell to review the significance of provincial funding to BC's invaluable public library system.

I do hope we will have that opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken Cooley".

Kenneth Cooley
Associate University Librarian, University of Victoria
President, BCLA

CC: *James Gorman, Deputy Minister of Education*
Jacqueline van Dyk, Director, Public Library Services Branch
Deb Thomas, Chair, Public Librarians' Interest Group, BCLA