



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
BRITISH COLUMBIA DIVISION

510 - 4940 Canada Way, Burnaby, British Columbia V5G 4T3
www.cupe.bc.ca
Tel: 604-291-9119 Fax: 604-291-9043

July 27, 2009

Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
Fax: 250-387-0087

Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Education and Minister
Responsible for Early Learning and
Literacy
East Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Fax: 250-387-3200

By fax

Dear Premier Campbell and Minister MacDiarmid:

Re: Provincial Grants to Public Libraries

I am writing as President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees B.C. Division (CUPE BC), the largest union in the province representing some 80,000 members. CUPE BC supports the call by the BC Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) for the Provincial Government to confirm that the provincial grants to public libraries will be the same as the 2008 grants, at minimum, or increased.

CUPE BC represents over 2,600 public library employees in 25 public library systems across the province. Our members are deeply committed to their work in libraries. They're also proud of the services they provide to the public. They recognize the devastating effects that any cut in provincial grants would have on the services libraries provide.

All libraries depend on provincial grants to some degree. The grants help to finance a variety of provincial programs including open access, online resources, literacy training, AskAway, the BC OneCard, and other services.

The Provincial Government, through the Public Library Services Branch (PLSB), has mandated that public libraries participate in these provincial programs so that all British Columbians have access. CUPE BC believes that the Provincial Government must maintain library grants to retain these valuable provincial programs and ensure continued access for all. In our opinion, the current level of provincial funding falls short of adequately funding these programs.

Barry O'Neill, President
Mark Hancock, Secretary-Treasurer

.. /2



July 27, 2009

Honourable Gordon Campbell & Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid

Page Two

As others have noted, public libraries often experience a significant increase in usage during tough economic times, and the recent downturn is no exception. Our public libraries, and the programs and services they provide, help change lives. They offer accessible resources of free and reliable information that helps people find jobs, assists with access to government services, fosters early childhood literacy development and supports learners of all ages. Any cuts would seriously impact job seekers, people with low incomes and young children especially.

While all libraries would suffer from the elimination or reduction of provincial grants, we believe that smaller libraries would be disproportionately affected. Generally, the grants form a higher percentage of total revenues for those libraries. For example, CUPE represents the six workers at the Smithers Public Library. That library's modest grant of \$55,426 in 2007 represented 21.7 per cent of the library's total revenue [source: PLSB 2007 Library Statistics].

CUPE BC understands that Minister MacDiarmid is meeting with representatives of the BCLTA on July 28. That would be a superb opportunity for the government to announce that it will provide funding at least the same as last year, or, preferably, announce an increase. The province of Alberta increased funding to libraries by 39 per cent in its April budget.

There is a wonderful quote from Premier Campbell on the PLSB website: "Our libraries are a great investment in community, learning and literacy. They open doors of opportunity for minds hungry for knowledge and adventure. They are the front lines of the effort to make British Columbia the most literate place in the world."

I wholeheartedly concur with that sentiment, Mr. Premier, and so I ask you to please ensure that this continues to be the case.

Sincerely,



Barry O'Neill
President
CUPE BC

c: Jacqueline van Dyk, Director, Public Library Services Branch (fax: 604-660-0435)
Andy Ackerman, President, BC Library Trustees Association (fax: 604-913-1413)
Ken Cooley, President, BC Library Association (fax: 604-609-0707)
CUPE BC Library Committee
Jim Sinclair, President, BC Federation of Labour (fax: 604-430-5917)