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MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

AN OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER CAMPBELL, MINISTER BOND AND ALL CANDIDATES IN THE PROVINCIAL
ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Provincial Funding to Public Libraries May be at Threat

Dear Premier Campbell, Minister Bond, and Candidates,

Over the past few weeks the Board of Fraser Valley Regional Library, along with other libraries across the province were concerned to hear rumours over possible significant reductions in the provincial funding for public libraries. During times of economic downturn, we recognize that all aspects of government funding need to be reviewed. However, we strongly believe the value that all British Columbians receive through the minimal support libraries receive in the greater scheme of provincial grants is far greater than the cost. Statistics have also shown that during economic downturns, libraries are one institution that British Columbians turn to for increased services, and as a result continued provincial funds are even more important for the equitable and sustained delivery of services to all residents of British Columbia.

As I am sure you are well aware, the lion's share of funding for libraries comes from municipal sources to fund facilities and purchase local library services. The provincial contribution supports libraries sharing those locally acquired resources across the province. This collaboration allows for all B.C. residents, from all walks of life, to have equal access to all the public library resources in British Columbia. This means every resident has access to millions of books, online reference services, and other programs through public library cooperation. This is a major contributor to the government's goal of making British Columbia the most literate jurisdiction in Canada, if not the world.

On behalf of the Board, which represents 15 local governments and well over 670,000 community members, we are unanimous in our concern and request that provincial funding is not reduced as you grapple with the economic challenges facing the government. We feel that any redirection of provincial funds away from public libraries would be penny wise and pound foolish when it is seen in the light of the benefits to all British Columbians.

We view the provincial funding as the foundation in ensuring the effectiveness of public libraries in all regions of B.C. This funding ensures the transfer of services and collaboration between libraries which would otherwise not be possible. Hence the multiple effect of leveraging municipal contributions across the province.

Attached to this letter is another background document prepared by a number of library partners for your information as well.

It is our hope that the province will continue to fund public libraries at their current levels. As stated, public libraries add immense value to our communities as centres of knowledge, literacy, lifelong learning, enjoyment, and even escape from the current economic pressures. During these tough economic times the entire public library system of British Columbia needs to be available to all residents across the province when they need them the most.

Sincerely,
H. Peter Fassbender, Chair

Fraser Valley Regional Library Board

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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About Fraser Valley Regional Library

Fraser Valley Regional Library is the largest public library system in British Columbia, with 24 community libraries serving over 670,000 people in its service area. Established in 1930, it is funded with taxes raised in the community it serves, plus a Government of BC operating grant. The governing Board consists of elected officials representing 15 member municipalities and regional districts. With its mission "to connect people to the world of information and ideas," FVRL plays a prominent role in the communities throughout the Fraser Valley.

FVRL Member Libraries

Agassiz Aldergrove Boston Bar
Brookswood Chilliwack Clearbrook
Fort Langley George Mackie Hope
Ladner Pioneer City of Langley Maple Ridge
Mission Mount Lehman Muriel Arnason
MSA Centennial Murrayville Pitt Meadows
Tsawwassen Terry Fox Walnut Grove
White Rock Yale Yarrow