

BCLTA Meets with Minister of Education

October 8, 2008

Attention Library Board Chairs/BCLTA Liaisons:

Directors via PLSB Listserve

At the end of September, in conjunction with the BC Library Reception at the Union of BC Municipalities Convention and the quarterly BCLTA Board meeting held in Penticton, your BCLTA President, Vice-President, and Executive Director held their **annual meeting with the Minister of Education**. On the agenda were issues of importance to the trustee community and to the library sector as a whole, including:

- Appreciation for provincial support and the value of further investment in libraries;
- Cross-sector collaboration, partnerships and shared-use facilities;
- BCLTA's library highway sign campaign; and
- Copyright/Bill C61.

On the first topic – that of **provincial support for libraries** – we are pleased to announce that the Ministry, through the Public Library Services Branch, has provided BCLTA with a \$15,000 grant to conduct an independent infrastructure needs assessment for the library sector. This will enable us to achieve an accurate picture of the status and adequacy of public library facilities throughout the province, which will in turn give library boards and staff the information they need to build a solid business case for new capital investments and support from all levels of government. Minister Bond acknowledged the need for investment in library facilities – especially in light of the changing needs of library patrons and the inability of many older library structures to meet these needs.

Next up for discussion was the issue of **partnerships and shared-use facilities**, such as the Elementary School/Community Centre/Public Library building recently completed in Pouce Coupe. BCLTA suggested there is a need to monitor these developments in order to ensure their continued effectiveness and to learn from the successes and challenges faced by early adopters. The Minister communicated her strong support for these and other collaborative ventures, which focus on resource sharing rather than duplication. She mentioned the new provincial push to establish “Neighbourhoods of Learning” and focused on libraries as natural centerpieces in this concept. But she also acknowledged some of the challenges to be overcome in establishing and maintaining effective communication and cooperation between parties to collaborative agreements. She ensured that her Ministry would be monitoring these partnerships closely and providing assistance/guidance where necessary.

The next topic on the meeting agenda was the campaign to install **library directional signs** along provincial highways. The idea being to not only direct travelers to local libraries to take advantage of free internet access, OneCard borrowing privileges, and other library services and programs, but to also

raise the general profile of public libraries and hence of literacy. Minister Bond was very receptive to this idea, and promised to take it up and even raise it with the Premier at an upcoming meeting.

Lastly, BCLTA raised the issue of **copyright legislation**. Although Bill C61 died on the Order Paper with the announcement of the federal election, there is no doubt that the issues raised in the Bill will re-appear at some point in the future. The unintended fallout of such legislation will be felt by libraries across the country and it is of paramount importance that legislators be informed of the potential impacts on the public library sector. Minister Bond committed to ensuring that the issue is considered at future meetings of the Canadian Ministers of Education, and advised that she would keep a close eye on federal copyright initiatives and legislation.

All in all, the meeting with Minister Bond was a productive one. BCLTA appreciated the opportunity to keep the Minister up to date on issues of importance to trustees, and we are confident the Minister got as much out of the meeting as we did. We look forward to keeping in touch with her, both directly and through the Public Library Services Branch, and we encourage our members to keep up the dialogue on issues you would like to see us bring forward. We are here to advocate on your behalf and we need your input in order to continue to do so.

The full text of BCLTA's **2008 Brief to the Minister** is attached to this bulletin, and will also be made available on the BCLTA website at www.bclta.org under the "Advocacy" tab.

Any questions or concerns about the foregoing can be directed to BCLTA's Executive Director, Errin Morrison, at execdirector@bclta.org.