

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 27, 2009

Don't pull the plug on libraries:
provincial cuts reduce library service in all BC communities

Vancouver: Provincial library funding is in jeopardy despite a surge of public use in communities across British Columbia. The Ministry of Education, the provincial department responsible for public libraries, has not released \$17.7 million of grant funding for 2009 and is considering further cuts in the 2010 budget.

The provincial government has traditionally provided 10% of public library funds through an annual grant process. In the fiscal year 2008/2009, \$17.7 million supported innovative and collaborative services that could not and would not be funded at the municipal level. Without provincial grants, significant cuts will result in these areas:

- Last year, with open access to library collections, more than 4,600,000 items were borrowed in the Lower Mainland alone by residents of other municipalities. Open access is supported by provincial funding.
- AskAway: for anyone with a question, BC libraries can provide an answer. This online service is available free to the public throughout the province.
- BC Summer Reading Club: children can maintain or enhance their literacy skills at all BC public libraries. The joys and benefits of reading last a lifetime.
- Books for Babies: the journey of lifelong learning begins at birth. All babies and their caregivers receive a book to share and to enjoy together.
- Online magazine, journal and newspaper subscriptions: hundreds of online publications are available online, anytime, with the click of a mouse. A provincial license for these databases provides each public library system with equal access to the information.

"Cuts to provincial library service hurt everyone, and particularly those living in rural, economically challenged communities," says Andy Ackerman, President of the British Columbia Library Trustees Association and Fort St. John Public Library Board Trustee. "In tough economic times, people are turning to their public library for job support, Internet service and access to government information. These cuts will seriously impact job seekers, people with low incomes and young children – essentially, among the most vulnerable citizens in our community."

"We have 2.5 million library cardholders in the province. They have spoken, and their message is loud and clear: don't pull the plug on library funding," says Langley Mayor Peter Fassbender, Chair of the Fraser Valley Regional Library Board. "Libraries change lives. They are a wellspring of free, reliable information to help people find jobs, to access government services, to foster early childhood development and to support learners of all ages. These essential services must be protected for the benefit of all BC residents."

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