

## Briefing Note Concerning Provincial Funding for Libraries in BC

### Issue

2009 Provincial Funding not received.

### Background

- For over 90 years the Province of British Columbia has been supporting public libraries through grants.
- Over the years the funding has been tied to various activities.
- In recent years grants are given to support libraries cooperating province-wide. These grants support such programs as interlibrary loan, BC OneCard, online reference and group purchasing such as online databases.
- Public libraries in BC receive approximately 18 million dollars in various provincial grants.
- Most years we receive a notice of how much money we can expect from the province and then receive the operating grants in June, approximately 14 million province-wide.
- In March we usually are asked for our plans for how we will spend the equity funding and then we receive the money as soon as we apply and the application is approved. Approximately 2 million province-wide.
- The OneCard grant is usually paid out at the end of one year for use in the following year; this is what happened this year. Approximately 2 million province-wide.

### Current Situation

- In March 2009 libraries received the prepayment on the OneCard grant for 2009/2010.
- No libraries have received their other grants at the writing of this note.
- Libraries have had discouraging news when we have queried the Public Library Services Branch staff at the Ministry of Education (public libraries fall under this ministry).
- The general indications are that there will be another provincial budget brought down in the fall.
- There continue to be strong indications that the Province has decided not to continue funding libraries in that budget.
- A delegation representing BCLTA, ABCPLD, BCLA, FVRL and UBCM will meet on July 28<sup>th</sup> with the new Minister responsible for public libraries to discuss the situation and encourage the Province to preserve library funding.
- A full press release and backgrounder on the situation facing BC's public libraries will be conveyed to the provincial and local media on Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup>.
- The press release and backgrounder will also be conveyed to all local governments in BC for their information and for use in writing the Minister and Premier (see below for details).

### Key Considerations

- If the provincial grant is withheld, all libraries will be short in their 2009 operating funds.
- Unless something changes, indications are that we will not know for sure the intentions of the Province until sometime this fall.
- The BCLTA is encouraging all its members to go back to their respective councils and discuss the matter.
- Further we would like to have **all mayors and board chairs send a letter to the Minister and Premier** outlining their concerns.

### **Points to Consider Including in a Letter to the Minister and Premier**

- Grants have been forthcoming for years and libraries have come to depend on them.
- The municipalities in BC pay for local library services.
- The provincial government has legislated how the libraries are created and how they will work together to create a province-wide resource for the citizens of BC.
- The provincial funding pays for the cooperative programs that create the provincial resource and provides equity for very small rural and remote libraries to have equitable access to resources across BC.
- It is not the responsibility of any one municipality to pay for this province-wide work.
- It is in the provincial interest to pay for the province-wide relationships and sharing that leverages significant dollars at both the local and provincial level.
- Provincial grants support:
  - Interlibrary loans,
  - Union Catalog,
  - Online reference services,
  - Online resources for all libraries such as magazines and encyclopedias,
  - Federations such as Interlink that deliver books between libraries across the lower mainland,
  - Literacy programming,
  - OneCard for all libraries in BC.
- If the grants that support these programs are cut, the programs will cease to exist.
- These programs are the ones that give every library in BC access to the entire collection and resources of all libraries in BC.

### **Letters Can be Faxed and Mailed To:**

The Honourable Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid  
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Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy  
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