

28 July 2009

~~Hon. Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid~~
~~Minister of Education~~
~~East Annex, Parliament Buildings~~
~~Victoria, BC V8V 1X4~~

Dear Dr. MacDiarmid:

We are very concerned about the freeze on provincial per capita operating grants to public libraries and the possibility of significant budget cuts to libraries and to the Public Library Service Branch (PLSB) in September.

In 2008/2009, the Coquitlam Public Library received a per capita grant of just over \$241,000 and additional provincial funding to support interlibrary loans, the BC OneCard, online reference services and shared databases, literacy and technology funding. The combined amount is a significant 7.6% of our overall budget. Losing this funding will severely curtail the materials we can buy and the programs we can provide for our community.

Under the direction and leadership of PLSB our library community has moved towards significant sharing of resources and programs. Every dollar invested in our libraries pays dividends to our communities and provides equity throughout the Province. Funding cuts would jeopardize our ability to do this in the future.

Our library with a service population of 120,000 provides a print collection of 150,000, 131 magazines, and international newspapers, audio books and tapes, books for the visually impaired, videos and DVD's, a large multilingual collection, language labs, meeting rooms, free internet use, wireless internet, free computer tutoring, job tours, introductions to newcomers, literacy tutoring, government publications, maps, mobile services and a wealth of online reference services. Our website allows patrons to reserve and renew books, enter interlibrary loans and access reference services and community information from home. 60% of our service population holds a library card. As well, the library is a point of first contact for newcomers to the community, an important social hub, and a supporter of literacy development.

We have noticed a marked increase in our usage since the economic downturn. We are the place the public turn to find the resources they need to improve their skills, increase their literacy and find new jobs and opportunities. This is not the time to cut our resources.

The government has been a strong supporter of libraries and especially of literacy to achieve the great goal of being the most literate province in Canada by 2010. At this point we ask that you don't undo all the good work that has been done and make BC a model for innovative library service.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Ahn Chair
Coquitlam Public Library Board

cc:
The Right Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier

Jacqueline van Dyk, Director, Public Library Services Branch

Errin Morrison, Executive Director, BC Library Trustees Association