

BCLTA

To develop and support library trustees to advance public library service in British Columbia.



June 17, 2008

The Honourable Stan Hagen
Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts
PO Box 9071 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Hagen:

The British Columbia Library Trustees' Association (BCLTA) represents the boards and trustees governing BC's public libraries. Our membership includes 70 library boards and over 650 library trustees who volunteer their time on library boards throughout the province. Our mission is "to develop and support library trustees to advance public library service in BC," and I am writing with this goal in mind.

BCLTA has recently been copied on a series of letters addressing the issue of public libraries as tourist destinations meriting proper highway signage. Our Association couldn't agree more and we are grateful to the Grand Forks Library Association for bringing this topic to the attention of government. While we understand there are a few communities across the province that have successfully requested and installed highway signs directing travelers to local public libraries, we would love to see collaboration on a province-wide library sign campaign.

As you may be aware, the Province of BC has done great work over the past several years in developing the OneCard system, whereby members of any public library in BC can borrow and return materials to any other public library in the province. What better way to promote literacy and support BC tourism than to encourage individuals and families to pack their library cards when they leave on holiday and stop and visit local libraries along their way?

With cooperation between your Ministry, the Ministry of Education (responsibility for libraries), the Ministry of Transportation (responsibility for highway signage), local governments and their public libraries, we could soon see signs directing visitors to every library in the province.

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I have enclosed an article from BCLTA's forthcoming Spring newsletter, telling one community's library sign story and encouraging public libraries across the province to write to the provincial government in the hopes of starting a province-wide sign campaign. While it may currently be possible to secure these signs – as demonstrated by the Tumbler Ridge Public Library – it's not an easy undertaking and there's no clear process for doing so. We would very much appreciate your help and support in this initiative, which we feel will be to the great benefit of all current and future patrons of BC's public libraries.

Sincerely,



Andy Ackerman
President, BCLTA

Enclosure: "Library Highway Sign Campaign" – article from Spring 2008 issue of *Open Door*

CC: The Honourable Gordon Campbell,
Premier

The Honourable Shirley Bond,
Minister of Education

The Honourable Kevin Falcon,
Minister of Transportation

Mr. Rod Harris, President and CEO
Tourism British Columbia

Ms. Wanda Hook, Product Services Manager
Tourism British Columbia

Ms. Jacqueline van Dyk, Director
Public Library Services Branch

Ms. Jane Grey, Chairperson
Grand Forks & District Public Library

- b. Exempting all facilities used as public libraries from property taxes regardless of who owns them;
 - c. Providing regional libraries with long-term borrowing authority.
(Met with Minister of Community Services to discuss these items in April 2008.)
3. Funding for a review of library infrastructure and facilities throughout the province.
(Currently under discussion with PLSB.)
 4. Participation in the upcoming review of the Library Act.
(Currently under discussion with PLSB.)
 5. Participation in the upcoming review and update of the Strategic Plan for Public Libraries. (Currently under discussion with PLSB.)

Please take a moment to think about the issues, concerns and challenges your library is facing and communicate these to Errin Morrison, BCLTA Executive Director, at execdirector@bclta.org. This is an important opportunity to advocate on behalf of our members, and trustee input is crucial to a successful process.

Library Highway Signs Campaign



Library highway signs outside Tumbler Ridge

In the summer of 2005, Tumbler Ridge librarian Michele Burton was driving through Saskatchewan when she noticed a library sign amidst the typical gas, food and lodging pictograms at the side of the highway. Taken with the idea, and wondering why BC shouldn't have a similar library signage program, she spoke with a government representative about it at a library symposium in the Lower Mainland later that year. This representative encouraged her to "Go and talk to that fellow over there about it, and that fellow just happened to be Premier Gordon Campbell. Premier Campbell, in turn, encouraged Michele to contact the Ministry of Transportation with her idea. Michele did so and, about nine months later, the Tumbler Ridge Library received a phone call from the company contracted for highway maintenance in the Peace Region. The caller said, "We've got three library road signs sitting in our office. What do you want us to do with them?" This phone call came as a complete surprise, and the library board had to then go through all the proper channels in order to get the signs installed – obtain permission from the local civic government and then submit the necessary

forms to the local Department of Highways, together with drawings of the locations where the signs were to be installed. Eventually the process came to a close and now, if you pass along any of the three highways that lead to Tumbler Ridge, you'll notice a proper, reflective, highway sign pointing you to the local library.

As you can imagine, the Tumbler Ridge Public Library was thrilled with its signs and proud to be the catalyst for a BC-wide library road sign initiative. Except that this isn't what happened. The initiative began and ended with those three signs outside Tumbler Ridge – and we're told this may be the case for another jurisdiction or two throughout the province. Until now that is

The library road sign movement seems to be gathering steam – and this time on a truly province-wide basis. It was one of the topics raised in the Trustee Roundtable session at this year's BCLTA conference, and it has also recently been brought to the attention of Tourism BC and the Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts by the Grand Forks Library Association. In an excellent letter to the Minister, Chairperson Jane Grey states that:

Public Libraries play a pivotal role in supporting the Provincial Government's goal of becoming the most literate jurisdiction in North America. We do this by extending our services and programs beyond our communities to include visitors and tourists

What better way for Tourism BC and the Provincial Government to support public libraries as visitor facilities than to simply place signage on main thoroughfares directing travellers to the public library?

Minister Hagen responded positively to this letter and advised the Grand Forks Library Association that "the suggestion of highway signage for libraries is now an agenda item that will be taken to the next advisory committee meeting for discussion. This Committee includes representatives from Tourism BC, the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, and the Ministry of Transportation.



Highway signs - Tumbler Ridge

BCLTA commends the Grand Forks Library Association for bringing this issue to the attention of the provincial government and we heartily encourage trustees across the province to join in this campaign. *Get this item on your local government's agenda, write to Minister Hagen and copy the Ministers of Transportation, Education, and the Premier – let's get these signs commissioned and installed throughout BC!*