



EXPANDING HORIZONS

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**23 July 2009**

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

Dear Dr. MacDiarmid:

I am writing to express our Board of Directors' concern over the freeze on provincial per capita operating grants to public libraries and the possibility of significant budget cuts to libraries and to PLSB in September.

In 2008/2009, the Salmo Public Library received a per capita grant of just over \$8,600. It has been the policy of our Board to earmark this money for books, and these funds are vital in order for us to maintain and update our collection. Our librarians have consistently been able to make this small allocation go a long way. The fact that we are a net lender of interlibrary loans attests to the strength and relevance of our collection. Although we are able to supplement this amount through fundraising activities organized by the Friends of the Library, we would not be able to raise anywhere near the amount of the provincial grant. Needless to say, we appreciate the longstanding and hopefully continuing support of the provincial government.

In addition to the per capita grant, our Library receives provincial funding to support interlibrary loans, the BC OneCard, online reference services and shared databases, and equity funding. As well, we are a member of the Kootenay Library Federation, which is funded through PLSB, and have actively participated in Board training, migration to Evergreen, conferences, shared author readings and consortium purchasing, all of which have strengthened our Board and our services to our community while achieving cost efficiencies. Every dollar invested in our Library pays significant dividends to our community and, through cooperation within the Federation, to our region.

With a total budget of just under \$100,000, our small library (service population of 2600) provides, in addition to a constantly updated print collection, over 20 magazines, local newspapers, audio books and tapes, books for the blind, videos and DVD's, a local history collection, free internet use, wireless internet, free computer tutoring, government publications, maps, 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. Over 60% of our service population holds a library card, and our circulation is consistently among the highest for libraries of our size. 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. (I could go on!)

I would like to mention that when we met with our local Council and regional district representative this spring for the approval of our annual budget allocation, we had decided that, in view of the downturn in the economy and the tough choices being faced by governments at all levels, we would not ask for any funding increase beyond the annual COLA we automatically receive. To our surprise and delight, Council and the Regional District of Central Kootenay decided that libraries are even more important in tough economic times and approved an increase of approximately \$5,000. They understood the increased need. Unemployed people use libraries for online job searches, to upgrade skills, and to communicate with others for assistance in retraining.

We appreciate and have been heartened by the support that our library has been receiving from the Campbell government, and we strongly urge you not to make cuts in funding to individual libraries or to PLSB. Please don't undo all the good work that has been done and is currently underway. BC has a chance to be a model for innovative library service.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Hohn, Chair  
Salmo Public Library Board

cc:

The Right Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier

Scott Sommerville, CAO, Village of Salmo

Jacqueline van Dyk, Director, Public Library Services Branch

Errin Morrison, Executive Director, BC Library Trustees Association