

July 31, 2009

The Honorable Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid  
Minister of Education and  
Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy  
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Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

The Richmond Public Library Board is struggling to deal with the possibility of cuts to the 2009 operating grant as well as to 2010 funding.

We are pleased that you met recently with representatives of the library community to hear directly the deep concern all trustees have regarding lower levels of funding. From the information we have received coming out of that meeting, it is our understanding that funding for public libraries in 2010 will likely not be at 2009 levels and that the status of the 2009 grants is not clear.

We do not question the government's commitment to libraries. The strategic vision your government provided in **Libraries Without Walls** and the associated funding increases to libraries over the last three years have been extremely effective and we are very appreciative of the government's leadership in this area. The very success of these programs is what underlines our concern with the current freeze and review of grants.

Richmond citizens have benefited tremendously from the additional money provided through the targeted grants for technology and literacy. We have been able to provide greatly improved access to the internet, put many more books into the hands of ESL students and tutors, provided multilingual materials to our ethnic community and provided a wealth of early childhood literacy materials with this funding. We are committed to ensuring that the progress made in developing these services and collections is not lost.

Equally important to Richmond residents have been the province-wide collaboration projects ranging from BC OneCard, Summer Reading Club support, access to electronic databases, audiobook downloading and support to key organizations such as InterLINK and BCLTA.

The foundation upon which these targeted grants and province-wide initiatives must be built is a strong local library and the per capita operating grants are critical to providing this stability. The BC Government has created a formula for success that is the envy of other library jurisdictions and we want to work with you to ensure it is sustained and further developed.

We understand the pressure the provincial government is under and that difficult decisions must be made. On behalf of Richmond citizens we urge you to:

1. Minimize cuts to 2010 funding. Maintain per capita funding to individual libraries at the highest possible level while ensuring the continuation of key provincial collaborative infrastructure. If difficult decisions have to be made about what to keep and what to cut, let the library community be involved in the discussions and set the priorities.
2. Send out the 2009 grants. The uncertainty of this funding is seriously undermining our ability to deliver day-to-day library services.
3. As soon as the economy allows, continue to carry out the government's vision as set out in **Libraries Without Walls** and resume funding at levels that will once again meet the needs of all BC citizens.

In the meantime, we will be asking our library users what services they value most and encouraging them to let the provincial government know how successful its support of public libraries has been in the past and the need to maintain these services.

Thank you for your commitment to public libraries and we wish you the very best in carrying out your responsibilities to all British Columbians in these very challenging economic times.

Yours sincerely,

*Lyn Greenhill for*

Lyn Greenhill, Chair  
Richmond Public Library

Copy: Premier Campbell  
Richmond MLAs  
City of Richmond Mayor and Council  
British Columbia Library Trustees Association (BCLTA)  
Jacqueline Van Dyk, Director, Public Library Services Branch, Ministry of Education