



To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries

January 24, 2017

Dear Parliamentary Secretary Larson:

Re: Rural Education Strategy and Community Engagement Request

I am writing on behalf of the **British Columbia Library Trustees Association (BCLTA)**. Please see below for more information about our association.

BCLTA shares with you, and those working with you, the goal of enabling exemplary educational experiences for K-12 students in BC. Within the provincial public library network, our focus has been on self-directed learning rather than a structured curriculum. However, the goal is similar – to create learning and growth opportunities for students to better participate in 21st century society and its economy.

In this goal our public libraries find some common purpose with school libraries or school-based resource centres, more recently named learning commons. While our ends and our intentions are similar, we also share an additional factor: financial constraints, specifically the critical need for more enabling resources, whether financial or facility-based. Members tell us this is true in rural and remote public libraries in many parts of the province. We have also learned that the challenges are similar for school libraries associated with rural and remote school districts.

We believe public libraries could and should share more than a common Ministry with school districts. While some BC public library systems are working collaboratively with their local school district to support students and families, we believe more opportunities should be explored, encouraged and possibly entrenched in policy. There is a rich literature associated with the issue of strengthening and transforming school libraries. We would be pleased to share this with you, should you wish.

We are also prompted in this submission by the report and recommendations of the **Royal Society of Canada's (RSC) Expert Panel Report**, entitled: *The Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives and Public Memory*. (2015). The Expert Panel stated:

In various consultations across the country we were introduced to the concept of the school-house public library, a facility usually within or attached to a school that serves also as a public library for the community. This represents a compromise for both library

sectors but in the rural or remote areas where they are most prevalent we observed their success. (p. 156)

The Expert Panel also noted that it was in the country's interest to make "... school libraries/learning commons the Canadian library priority of the moment..." The Panel did not promote the school-house public library as a panacea for every remote or rural situation, nor does BCLTA. However, we do encourage the Rural Education Strategy to consider emerging models of library service delivery, as well as the efficient and effective usage of current and future facilities and infrastructure. The Panel recommended that:

55. provincial and territorial ministers responsible for public libraries and ministers of education join together to develop provincial standards that would direct the development of a school-house public library model drawing inspiration from the best practices and successes of those currently in operation. (p. 159)

With public libraries and K-12 education in the same ministry, BC could be proactive in developing workable BC-focussed models, as was anticipated by the Royal Society Panel. We encourage you and the Ministry to use the opportunity created by the Rural Education Strategy process to explore such models. This would also be in line with various ideas emerging through the online discussion which the Strategy has encouraged.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this perspective. We wish you every success in your endeavour. Unlocking the potential of the young in our society is our shared cause. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,



Donna Macdonald,
President,
BC Library Trustees Association
#108—9865 140th Street,
Surrey, B.C.,
Canada, V3T 4M4

The BCLTA, founded in 1977, has as its members the boards and trustees that govern local public libraries in British Columbia. We represent 71 library boards and more than 700 library trustees who volunteer their time to oversee the successful operations of public libraries throughout the province.

Our mission is “*to support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries,*” and in doing so, we strive to provide a range of services to trustees and boards to help them become leaders in their communities.

BCLTA also fills an important strategic role, providing organized representation to local, provincial, and federal governments on behalf of library trustees. We undertake ongoing advocacy work to these same levels of government and the public to raise the profile of – and resolve the issues facing – public libraries across British Columbia.