

SCHOOL LIBRARY QUESTIONS

Has the Province cut funding for school libraries?

No. In fact, the Province has added \$150 million in school operating funding to go directly towards ensuring all students have access to school libraries and learning resources, like textbooks, and quality arts and music programs.

School boards have reported they will spend an estimated \$92 million this year on school library staff, services and supplies (i.e. \$63M for salaries, \$14M for benefits and \$15M for services and supplies).

A total of 1,193 FTE staff will help schools provide library services across the province this year (i.e. 745 teachers, 282 support staff, 139 education assistants, 24 principals and vice-principals, and three excluded employees).

Are school boards using the additional funding to improve library services?

Yes. At least 12 out of 60 districts have indicated they will be investing some of the additional funding to improve library and learning resources.

For example:

- SD 35 (Langley) is spending \$1.5 M to improve library and music programs at the elementary and secondary school levels.
- SD 36 (Surrey) has added seven FTE teacher librarians.
- SD 39 (Vancouver) has invested \$736,200 to enhance libraries and learning resources. It is also spending \$60,000 to continue support for its library automation system.
- SD 44 (North Vancouver) is spending about \$550,000 to improve its library services.
- SD 57 (Prince George) is spending \$500,000 to improve school library services and to increase its teacher librarian staff from 14 to 17.
- SD 61 (Greater Victoria) is spending \$322,000 to staff school libraries with specific emphasis at the elementary level.
- SD 68 (Nanaimo) is investing \$138,000 to reestablish the 2001 service level for elementary libraries to 2 FTE staff.

Are school libraries as good today as they were five or 10 years ago?

Yes, and in many cases they're better. Today's school libraries include more computers and access to research materials than in the past. The Province has upgraded Internet access at almost 600 schools throughout B.C. so that even school libraries in rural and remote areas now have access to high speed

Internet. The school Internet upgrades are in addition to the Province's investment of \$12 million over the next three years to improve public libraries.

The BCTF says there are fewer teacher librarians in schools. Is that true?

School districts have a number of options available to operate their libraries. While some have chosen to reduce the number of teacher librarians, others have increased the number of teacher librarians. In some districts, volunteers help maintain school libraries and assist students and teachers. In other districts, librarian aides provide library services.

The Province has provided an extra \$150 million in school operating funding this year to improve access to services such as school libraries. The Surrey School District has used its share of this funding to add seven teacher-librarians for 2005. The Prince George District has increased its elementary teacher librarians from 14 to 18 – in spite of an expected drop in enrolment by 600 students. The Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District is using its funding to reestablish its 2001 service level for elementary library service.

How do B.C.'s school libraries compare to those in other provinces?

A recent Statistics Canada study found that BC has the second highest average teacher librarian per school in the country. BC has an average of .48 teacher librarians per school – nearly twice the Canadian average of .25.

The report also shows that B.C. was above the national average in per student library spending expenditures. We're providing an extra \$150 million to operate B.C. schools this year – the largest increase in more than a decade.