



For Immediate Release
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BCGEU slams Liberals' deep cuts to library grants

Deep cuts to library funding quietly revealed Thursday by Education Minister Margaret McDiarmid will have significant consequences for public library services across the province and especially in smaller communities, says the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union.

McDiarmid confirmed the Liberal government will cut provincial grants to libraries by 22 per cent, or four million dollars, in the September budget.

Libraries across B.C. have been bracing for the cuts for weeks, as the government refused to release the grant money or inform them of any changes to the funding. For some libraries in smaller towns and cities outside of the Lower Mainland and Victoria the grants make up more than 50 per cent of their total revenue for the year, and go toward literacy programming, funding interlibrary loans, licensing online resources and much more.

"Our members are very concerned that these latest cuts will translate into service reductions and job losses at a time when more British Columbians are relying on their libraries to help them and their families cope with the economic downturn," says BCGEU President Darryl Walker, whose union represents more than 200 workers at public libraries across the province.

"Libraries and their staff provide an invaluable service to British Columbians looking for jobs or information on training programs, or just somewhere to spend an afternoon with their family that doesn't cost an arm and a leg."

Walker warns that because the announcement comes so late in the budget year, libraries will have to juggle their budgets and may be forced to significantly reduce staffing hours as they scramble to make up for this latest Liberal cut to public services.

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