

## **Moving Forward: A National Summit on Libraries and Literacy**

**Table:** Libraries and Government/NGO Relations

**Time:** 10:30-12:30

**Number of participants:** 31 (16 + 15)

### **Participants' experience with theme area:**

- Both sessions including librarians, Literacy workers, and adult learners
- First session also included government literacy workers and representatives of independent living groups.

### **Opportunities:**

- Champions:
  - Success Stories of “celebrities”: High profile, credible (ex: Jacques Demers, Ken Dryden, Roch Carrier)
  - Grassroots/Local success stories: local families or people who are working on literacy.
  - Media figures who will promote cause (Peter Mansbridge, Rick Mercer)
  - Politicians (Prime Minister, Governor General, Mrs. Harper)
  - Business leaders
- Buying into a National Vision
  - Create a coalition of literacy players
  - Tailor the message to each audience
- Potential Federal level actors:
  - All ministers should be concerned, especially: HRSDC, Health, Justice, Heritage, Industry.
  - \*Prime Minister\* and \*Finance Minister\*
- Potential NGO partners:
  - Publishers, social services, poverty groups, chamber of commerce, industry, Lion’s Club (etc.), Aboriginal community, authors, unions, school boards, National Film Board, CBC.

### **Challenges:**

- No representation in government (BC example)
- Jurisdiction (Federal, Provincial)
- Consistency of policy (Competing priorities and focuses)
- Absence from the agenda (No seat at the table)
- Access to decision makers (making politicians care about literacy)
- Identifying what government actors want.
- Priority of the message (literacy is not a high profile priority)
  
- Failure to link/integrate interested parties
  - Need to identify each group’s assets for better cooperation

- Mainstreaming accessibility issues (ex: including disabled resources in the mainstream, rather than referring to the March of Dimes)
- Lack of long-term vision, need for Action Plan.
- Need for a Champion
- Lack of evidence based decision making (need to concretely prove value)
- Need for identification of long-term effects of the problem
- Money: Program funding, where funds will come from.
- Silo Effect
- Awareness
  - In government
  - In the population generally
- Acceptance: convince parties that the problem exists (no more “that can’t be true in Canada)
- Need to “speak” government’s language.
- Re-branding libraries, literacy workers, identify role of libraries and literacy organizations.

#### **Project or action ideas:**

- Have high profile events.
- Use the library or literacy organization as a meeting place: invite your champion, politicians (federal, provincial, local), media, and population.
- Lobby both top down, and bottom up (grassroots) to create the most interest.
- Allow for hands-on participation of figures (ex: President Bush reading to school children)
- Create focused long-term goals
- Create concrete short term goals
- Write letters (not emails) that echo a cohesive message across the board
- Organize an official CLA lobby (letter campaign), but also engage in local lobbying
- Tie literacy to issues important to the individual or group you are lobbying (ie: lobby industry by saying the increased literacy leads to a more productive work force).
- Format letters where you:
  - Make a point (ex: literacy is important)
  - Have an argument (ex: higher literacy supports Canadian heritage)
  - Use evidence (ex: here is a program that has worked, which could be a model for Canada)
- Promote and create partnerships with NGOs
- Speak at local events and NGO groups (ex Rotary Club)
- Develop a literacy action toolkit
- Need radio & TV ads, since people with literacy issues can’t read flyers or signs
- Increased programs
- More books

**Urgent “To Do” List:**

- Create an Action Plan
- Identify a champion
- Create a clear, concise message [focus].
- Build & support a coalition
- Create a “Big Ask” (ex: \$100 million to literacy, ex: X number literate by X date, ex: X year commitment to making Canadians the most literate country)
- Develop “best practices”
- Find literacy funding