

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

At a time when research shows that early literacy is the number one determinant of future success for a child, it is surprising that the government is closing down school libraries, leaving schools to struggle to raise money for books.

**We know that a one per cent increase in literacy adds \$18.4 billion to the Canadian economy,<sup>1</sup> so why does the government continue to view books as a cost, rather than an investment?**

I believe passionately in a world where our children have access to books, and where schools have adequate resources to encourage and stimulate a love of reading among their students.

Despite Canada being a wealthy G8 nation, the provincial government is not allocating enough resources to fund school libraries and foster a love of reading in young students.

School book budgets have plummeted over the past two decades: the amount spent on books for one child in the 1970s must stretch to cover nine children today,<sup>2</sup> with some schools receiving less than \$2.00 per child for books.<sup>3</sup> Considering literacy is the most important investment we can make in a child's future, this figure is shocking.

We need to address this issue before it's too late. There are serious long-term social and economic consequences for ignoring the crisis.

As Minister of Education in this province, you are in a position to positively affect the lives of so many children, and help provide the support they need to develop a lifelong love of reading, leading to their future success.

**I implore you to allocate a bigger budget to schools in this province. Additional funding can make the difference between empty shelves and a thriving culture of literacy.**

See for yourself the miraculous transformation that adequate funding can make to a high-needs school. "Writing on the Wall," a short documentary commissioned by the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation, shows first-hand how grave the situation is in our schools, and how profoundly it affects the lives of our youngest Canadians.

Please take the time to watch it at [www.loveofreading.org](http://www.loveofreading.org) and fund literacy and learning at levels that contribute to the growth of our children and our country.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada study, June 22, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ken Haycock, "The Crisis in Canada's School Libraries." In 1970, many Canadian school districts budgeted to buy three books per child. Today, the average budget covers one-third of a book per child.

<sup>3</sup> In 2007, Ogdan School in Thunder Bay, ON, was allocated only \$1.27 per child per year for new books by the provincial government.

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