

Awareness campaign highlights importance of public libraries

“Public libraries are important to me, my family, my community.”

Printed on bright yellow door hangers and posters, this is the message Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia (LBANS) hopes the public will take to candidates during the 2009 provincial election campaign.

“LBANS members believe this campaign will allow the public to come forward and show their support for the library and its services,” says Claire Detheridge, president of LBANS. “The simple act of hanging a bright yellow door hanger or poster will not only make candidates aware of the importance of libraries, but the general public as well.”

At a recent meeting of board chairs and chief librarians of the nine Nova Scotia regional libraries, the decision was made to pursue the campaign.

“We realize we are in the middle of an election,” she adds; “and we want the candidates to realize that public libraries are important to the public, and, therefore, should be important to the candidates.”

During tough economic times library use is actually increasing, making them a smart, effective investment for the Province, she says. Recent studies and surveys done throughout Canada and the United States have shown that more and more people rely on public libraries during a recession.

Detheridge puts this in perspective: “Libraries are so quietly efficient in the way they provide services that they operate below most people’s radar.”

More than one-third of Nova Scotia residents are active library users. Libraries put computers, the Internet, books, magazines and newspapers within reach of a significant part of the population who might otherwise lack access to these information sources, she explains.

Services provided by municipal, provincial and federal governments through libraries are important for citizens, especially rural residents, she says. Literacy levels are supported with free access to reading materials and programs.

“A vital piece of the community fabric needs our support,” she concludes.

The door hangers and posters are available at the circulations desks of most regional library branches.

The door hangers are to be given out to the public to hang on their doors to make candidates in the provincial election see the level of support for public libraries in their communities. (Ian White photo/Western Counties Regional Library)