



*To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries*

September 21, 2018

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

**Regarding 2019 BC Government Budget Priorities**

Dear Committee Members,

This submission is on behalf of the BC Library Trustees Association, which represents over 700 community leaders and local government officials who govern public libraries across British Columbia.

It is urgent that we bring to your immediate attention the importance of provincial support for public libraries. Public libraries are the only public institutions that are truly equitable in providing services for all community members so that they may participate in, and benefit from the social and economic development of their communities. Public libraries are also the only freely accessible public spaces for all British Columbians to connect with, learn about, and experience, the advantages of living in this province.

We know that public libraries significantly contribute to the government's goals for making life more affordable, improving services, and building a strong, sustainable and innovative economy for all British Columbians. We also know that this committee is aware of the important role of public libraries from the annual UBCM resolutions regarding provincial public library funding and from the compelling stories and evidence annually submitted to this committee from public library trustees, staff, community members, and local government officials from across the province.

We appreciate the provincial government's recognition of the public library funding issue. In 2017 the provincial government, in response to the UBCM Resolution B60, acknowledged that the cost of delivering public library services has increased with changing technology and other demands. We are heartened that we all share the understanding of the need for adequate and reliable provincial funding for public libraries.

Across the 247 public library service points serving BC we are making a difference to community social and economic development and individual well-being through:

- People accessing business development resources, government services, and employment opportunities with the help of expert library staff and connectivity that bridges the continued digital divide.
  - [Lynda.com](#), Greater Victoria Public Library and others across the province.
  - [Business resources](#), New Westminster Public Library
  - [Chetwynd Resource Corner](#)
- Newcomers finding welcoming services and support for integration.
  - [Welcome to the Okanagan Regional Library!](#)
  - [New-to-BC Library Champions Project](#)
- Community members learning together, whatever their age, need, and background.
  - [The Playground](#), Fraser Valley Regional Library
  - [Reading for Reconciliation](#), Terrace Public Library
  - [Personal Planning Workshops](#), Castlegar Public Library
  - [After School Code Club](#), Surrey Libraries
- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development.
  - [BC Summer Reading Club](#)
  - [Prince George Gaming Night: Tens to Adults](#)
- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the TRC Calls to Action.
  - [Indigenous Storyteller in Residence](#), Vancouver Public Library
  - [Truth and Reconciliation in Our Community](#), Smithers Public Library
  - [Honouring the Truth and Reconciling for the Future](#), Squamish Public Library

The BCLTA urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to understand that provincial government financial support is critical to the successful continuance of public libraries and their positive impact on BC communities.

As such, in collaboration with our BC Public Library Partners<sup>1</sup>, we ask that the provincial government include the following priorities in the 2019 provincial budget.

### **1. Provincial Funding for Public Libraries**

Provincial funding that, at a minimum, includes annual increases to account for inflation. While libraries appreciate the stability of grant funding that government has provided since 2010 (approximately \$14 million per year), the lack of regular increases means that each year libraries receive less and less support, due to inflationary pressures. After many years of this, libraries are falling behind in their ability to meet growing needs.

As well, we call for the reinstatement of the Budget Line Item for B.C. public libraries.

### **2. Public Library Services in First Nation Communities**

The establishment of provincial resources and funding to work with First Nation communities on defining, developing, and delivering public library services in First Nation communities, by First Nation communities, is required. Many of these communities have few to no public library services, and this gap inhibits certain opportunities for learning, discovery and creativity that are available to other British Columbians.

### **3. Connectivity**

Government commitment to connectivity is needed. Connectivity is critical in the digital age, yet adequate broadband is in short supply and/or cost-prohibitive, particularly in rural or remote locations. Most public libraries are faced with both rising costs and rising demand.

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<sup>1</sup> The BC Public Library Partners are the BC Library Trustees Association, BC Library Association, Association of BC Public Library Directors, and BC Libraries Cooperative

In addition, the BCLTA asks that the following be given budgetary consideration.

#### **4. Provincial Support for Public Library Boards**

Provincial funding and resources for trustee orientation and board learning and development is in alignment with the provincial government's responsibility for the successful oversight of the legislative and governance framework for public libraries and the upholding of the *Library Act*. Strong effective public library boards are critically important for strong effective public libraries.

The BCLTA appreciates the opportunity to participate in this provincial budget process. We trust that you will fully consider the positive impact of public libraries across the province and our priorities for the 2019 budget.

Sincerely,



Babs Kelly

Executive Director, BCLTA

cc: Jerrilyn Schembri, President, BCLTA