

**Salt Spring Island  
Public Library**

129 Mc Phillips Avenue, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2T6  
<http://salspring.bc.libraries.coop/>



June 18, 2019

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

**RE: 2020 BC Government Budget Priorities**

Dear Committee Members:

This submission is on behalf of The Salt Spring Island Public Library

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. 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:

- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the TRC Calls to Action.
- People accessing the information and resources they need for personal enjoyment and life needs, learning new skills, starting a local business, and connecting with government services, with the help of expert library staff and connectivity that bridges the continued digital divide.
- Newcomers finding welcoming services and support for integration.
- Community members learning together, whatever their need and background.
- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development.

June 18, 2019

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Page 2

The Salt Spring Island Public Library urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to act on our shared understanding that provincial government financial support is critical to the successful continuance of public libraries and their positive impact on BC communities.

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. Since 2009 the public library community has asked that the provincial government provide funding for public libraries that at a minimum includes annual increases to account for inflation. Despite these repeated requests, for the past decade public libraries have received no increase to funding.

This year we are asking the provincial government for \$20 million for public libraries in 2020 as this will help address the chronic under-funding, lack of increases for inflation, and past government cuts.

Your attention to this urgent issue is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Holt', with a large, stylized flourish extending upwards and to the right.

David Holt, Chair  
Salt Spring Island Public Library Association  
129 McPhillips Ave,  
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2T6

CC:

Gary Holman, Salt Spring Island Director for the Capital Regional District  
Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education  
Adam Olsen, MLA of British Columbia for Saanich North and the Islands  
Elizabeth May, Member of Parliament for Saanich—Gulf Islands