

June 24, 2019

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Regarding 2020 BC Government Budget Priorities
Submission on behalf of the Burnaby Public Library

Dear Committee Members,

It is urgent that we bring to your immediate attention the importance of provincial support for public libraries.

Public libraries provide services for all community members so that they may participate in, and benefit from the social and economic development of their communities. 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:

- 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. At Burnaby Public Library, we answered more than 223,000 questions in 2018, and 62,000 people attended 1,762 programs. BPL also provides free online technology courses that help people get the skills they need to find work.
- Welcoming spaces and services for all residents. In 2018, 1.8 million people visited libraries in Burnaby, and community groups and individuals made use of our free meeting rooms more than 4,000 times. Our staff hear daily about the impact our services have, on a newcomer whose first port of call on arriving in Burnaby is the local library, on a gay teenager whose relationship with library staff gives him the confidence to ask for resources and help for the first time, and on a homeless person whose use of social media on library computers keeps him connected to his family.

- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support early literacy and community connection. Burnaby Public Library users checked out more than 3 million items in 2018, enabling families and individuals of all income levels to access books, DVDs, magazines and online resources that they would not otherwise be able to afford.
- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. In April 2019, 95 Burnaby Library staff and trustees participated in four experiential workshops to increase our understanding of the history and current realities of Indigenous communities and people. Each June, we partner with local organizations to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Burnaby 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,



Lorraine Shore, Board Chair



Beth Davies, Chief Librarian

cc: Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education
 MLA Katrina Chen
 MLA Raj Chouhan
 MLA Anne Kang
 MLA Janet Routledge

The BC Public Library Partners:

Scott Hargrove, Chair, Association of BC Public Library Directors
Babs Kelly, Executive Director, BC Library Trustees Association
Annette DeFaveri, Executive Director, BC Library Association
Kevin Millsip, Executive Director, BC Libraries Cooperative