



Castlegar & District Public Library

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June 28, 2019

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Regarding
2020 BC Government Budget Priorities.

Dear Committee Members,

This submission is on behalf of the Castlegar & District Public Library.

It is urgent that I 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.

I 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. Our library individually makes a difference through:

- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the TRC Calls to Action.
 - Consciously purchasing items by Indigenous authors
 - Adding resources that facilitate learning about Indigenous peoples

- Highlighting National Indigenous Peoples Day through displays
 - Inviting the Circle of Indigenous Nations Society to tell stories and drum at our Summer Reading Club
- 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.
 - Purchasing resource rich databases like Lynda.com to facilitate learning new skills
 - Offering 11 public internet access stations
 - Adding a Digitization Station and Mobile Computer Lab
 - Offering free exam invigilation and computers to take online training courses required by employers
 - Providing outreach to 3 senior care centres and homebound individuals
 - Providing outreach to 2 Strong Start Centres, 1 daycare and 2 schools
- Newcomers finding welcoming services and support for integration.
 - Providing free meeting space for the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy ESL programs
- Community members learning together, whatever their need and background.
 - Nidus Personal Planning sessions for end of life and incapacitation planning
 - Author visits
 - Community Learning Place in the library facilitated by the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy
- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development.
 - BC Summer Reading Club
 - Parent Child Mother Goose
 - Toddler Storytime
 - Preschool Storytime
 - Tinker Time STEAM for preschoolers
 - Full STEAM Ahead for school aged children
 - Double Digits Tween driven activities

I urge 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 I am 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 blue ink, appearing to read 'KimPartanen', is positioned above the typed name.

Kimberly Partanen

Library Director

CC:

Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education

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