



**KASLO & DISTRICT**  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

June 20, 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 Kaslo & District Public Library Board of Trustees,**

Our library and board joins other public library boards across British Columbia in expressing the urgent need to increase provincial support to \$20 million in 2020.

Annual provincial funding for BC public libraries has remained at \$14 million since 2009. This means that public libraries receive less and less support each year, 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.

On each open day, public libraries meet provincial goals by making life more affordable and providing essential services for conducting business, learning, enjoyment, and building connections in an accessible and welcoming space. BC Public Libraries offer much more service than a decade ago with changes in technology, the addition of digital literacy programs, and the need to reduce the digital divide.

In Kaslo, it is a regular part of our day to help people use the public computers and other tech equipment in addition to circulating materials, locating information, delivering programs, sharing resources with the rest of the province, and managing operations.

With an increase in provincial funding, our library would be better able to meet provincial goals to support the needs of our community. We do our best with provincial and local government funding, but still find it a challenge to keep up. For example, in 2018, we applied for a Technology Grant through Columbia Basin Trust to replace equipment to improve operations. In order to demonstrate sustainability for the grant process, a 5-year rotation plan for all tech equipment was created replacing an outdated plan that was not comprehensive due to rapid changes in technology in a short period of time. This exercise showed that operations are not quite sustainable. Our library needs more support to keep up with technology to properly rotate equipment and to introduce new equipment, services, and programs as technology changes and community needs change. We urge the province to increase annual funding to help public libraries continue to be equitable and accessible with current digital tools and services.

At our rural public library in Kaslo 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.
  - Liam Fitzpatrick from Circle of Indigenous Nations will tell stories and drum for the Summer Reading Club Guest Speaker Series for all ages.
  - Adding new titles addressing reconciliation to the collection regularly. These titles are in high demand.
- 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.
  - On demand help with government forms, technology, etc
  - Reliable public computers and Fibre Optics WIFI
  - Family Storytime programming – helping new parents meet other families
  - Family STEAM programming – inviting parent & child (often father and child) to work/play together to solve challenges with robots, KEVA blocks, and more
  - Summer Reading Club with a variety of programs including family events
- Newcomers finding welcoming services and support for integration.
  - We offer immediate membership to newcomers to make the library accessible and welcoming after a move.
- Community members learning together, whatever their need and background.

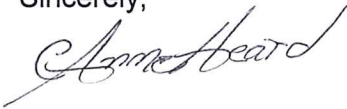
- Open Circle Poetry monthly meetings– initiated and run by volunteers
- Bookclub for adults – monthly meetings – initiated and run by volunteers
- On demand instruction on how to use mobile devices for accessing Overdrive
- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development.
  - [BC Summer Reading Club](#)
  - Family Storytime (age 0-5) & Family STEAM

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.

This year we are asking the provincial government to act on this understanding by supporting an increase to \$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,



Anne Heard

Board Chair, Kaslo & District Public Library

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