



Salmo Valley Public Library

PO Box 458

Salmo BC V0G 1Z0

June 23, 2019

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Regarding 2020 BC Government Budget Priorities

Dear Committee Members,

I have made submissions regarding Public Library Funding for the past several years. Each year I have been encouraged by your committee's recommendations to government to provide inflation adjusted increases and to consider additional increases to implement new innovations in service delivery.

In 2017 the Union of BC Municipalities Convention passed a resolution calling on the provincial government to restore funding for the public library system to a level of 21 per cent of the core annual budget required to operate the British Columbia Public Library System in an efficient, effective and equitable manner.

The Ministry of Education's response to the UBCM resolution was encouraging: *"Public libraries are a key partner in the delivery of quality and innovative public library services across BC. Communities benefit from direct funding to public libraries and support for province-wide shared services, which increases access to programs and materials for citizens."*

Public libraries are the only way many residents have to connect with, learn about, and access government services. 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 and provide life-long educational opportunities for everyone.

Across the 247 public library service points serving BC, libraries 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.
 - The Salmo Library recently partnered with the local school to obtain a grant and purchase a collection of Indigenous literature
- 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.
- - A session on Robotics is being held and Tech Kits will be available for loan
 - Income Tax assistance
 - GALE courses – free on-line educational opportunities
- Community members learning together, whatever their need and background.

- Local author readings
 - Book clubs
 - Scrabble tournaments
 - Outreach library services to neighbouring communities and housing complexes
- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development
 - Summer Reading Club

While libraries appreciate the stability of grant funding that government has provided since 2010, 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. There seems to be no lack of understanding of the value of the services libraries provide and there seems to be no lack of understanding that increased funding is required. Despite these repeated requests, for the past decade, public libraries have received no increase to funding.

This year we join in a provincial initiative 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.

We urge the Committee to prioritize the need for increased funding to libraries. Libraries are an incredible and cost effective way to ensure a literate, educated, engaged and dynamic populace. It is urgent that the government realize the desperate need for provincial support for public libraries across the province

Sincerely,

Valene Foster
Board Chair – Salmo Valley Public library

CC:
Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education
MLA Michelle Mungall, Nelson/Creston
Scott MacDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
Premier John Hogan

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