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June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Attention:

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
Regarding 2020 BC Government Budget Priorities Submission  
on behalf of the Fort St. John Public Library Association

Dear Committee Members,

You have probably heard the saying before that, 'Hindsight is 20/20.' This idiom, according to the Miriam-Webster dictionary, means "the full knowledge and complete understanding that one has about an event only after it has happened" (Miriam-Webster, 2019). When it pertains to library funding cuts, we cannot procrastinate. We need the province of British Columbia to recognize the value and impact that our libraries have. We cannot be complacent and then rely on hindsight, when it comes to how we fund our public libraries. Our 2020 moment is now, and that is why we are asking the provincial government to restore the library budget to **\$20 million for 2020**.

This year across the province of British Columbia, library staff and patrons are asking the provincial government to consider the precarious future of libraries. We are asking them to have the foresight to plan for the preservation of public library services, continued plans for thriving communities

and a recognized gathering place for furthering Reconciliation and the TRC Calls to Action. To plan for these changes, the provincial government needs to address the financial constraints that affect libraries. The slogan “**20M in 2020**” is being lobbied across the province of British Columbia. The province needs to help sustain their 71 public libraries and their wide array of programs and services. The consistent and constant need to justify the need for libraries is a fallacy, as they are the cornerstones of our democratic societies. Their very existence means that the people that they serve have access to information, services and programs that will enrich their lives. Libraries make life more affordable to citizens as they provide free individualized assistance with locating resources and utilizing a wide variety of technology. Patrons of our public libraries already appreciate the value of the library, now it’s time for the provincial government to understand.

Every day at the Fort St. John Public Library Association, I hear patrons telling our library staff how grateful they are for their help. Patrons come to the library looking for help with all kinds of things - from scanning documents, filling out forms, using a USB key and even understanding the bus schedule. Public libraries have to consistently allocate their very tight budgets to train staff in order to keep up with the ever-changing technological demands of our world.

Public libraries would rather spend their time *improving* their value to their patrons (by having more space, more resources, more technology and more staff) rather than *proving* their value as a commodity. We do not need to prove our usefulness to our patrons, they know the staff at the library will help them when there’s no one else who will. Public libraries improve the quality of life for our community members and strive to provide a strong, but flexible backbone for the economy. Our economy gets a consistent return on investment for every dollar put into the library. “Canadian libraries have found that for each dollar put into the local public library (they) offer \$4-7 in returns” (Grand Forks Gazette, 2019).

As we look toward the future of our libraries and our citizens, we recognize the importance of relationship building and that the free, non-judgmental assistance provided by public libraries and their staff, contributes to our overall resiliency and strength. Please join us in our “**20M for 2020**” campaign by showing your support and writing to your local government and/or visiting <https://bclaconnect.ca/highlight/20m-in-2020-public-library-funding/>

Sincerely,

Karlene Duncan

Director of Library Services

Fort St. John Public Library Association

CC:

Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education

MLA Dan Davies

MP Bob Zimmer

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

**References:**

Grand Forks Gazette "Have your say on library funding". Gawletz, Cari Lynn. Retrieved 2019 June 24 from <https://www.grandforksgazette.ca/opinion/column-have-your-say-on-library-funding/>

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online. "Twenty-twenty hindsight". Retrieved 2019 June 24 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/twenty-twenty%20hindsight>

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