

Dana Bergen  
Chetwynd, B.C.

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 myself as a community library user and parent of library users and as chair of our public library board.

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 through:

- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the TRC Calls to Action.
  - [The Blanket Exercise](#), Nelson Public Library
  - [Let's Talk about Reconciliation: Indigenous Film Series](#), Surrey Libraries
  - [Honouring Reconciliation: Ambleside by Canoe](#), West Vancouver Memorial Library
  - [An evening with Bob Joseph, 21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act](#), Smithers Public Library
  - [What is Reconciliation and What it is Not](#), Vancouver Island Regional Library, Courtenay
  - [Strategic Plan, 2018 to 2012](#), North Vancouver City Public Library
  - [Secwepemctsin](#), Thompson Nicola Regional Library, Kamloops Library
  - [Indigenous Storyteller in Residence](#), Vancouver Public Library
- 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.
  - [Chetwynd Resource Centre](#), Chetwynd Public Library
  - [Gale Courses](#), Fraser Lake Public Library
  - [Assistive Services](#), Greater Victoria Public Library
  - [Outreach / Homebound Services](#), Castlegar Public Library
  - Welcoming spaces and services for forest fire evacuees, such as ease of access to new or replacement of cards, family programming, and kids being able to continue their involvement and learning with the Summer Reading Club.
- Newcomers finding welcoming services and support for integration.
  - [Newcomers: Welcome to the Okanagan Regional Library!](#)
  - [New-to-BC: The Library Link for Newcomers](#)

- [Immigrant Settlers Services Drop-in](#), Whistler Public Library
- Community members learning together, whatever their need and background.
  - [Quest Lecture Series](#), Squamish Public Library
  - [The Playground](#), Fraser Valley Regional Library
  - [Tuesday Night Music Jam](#), McBride Public Library
  - [LGBTQ2 and Allies Youth Group](#), Gibsons and District Public Library
- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development.
  - [BC Summer Reading Club](#)
  - [STEAM Afternoons](#), Invermere Public Library
  - [Tween Drop-in](#), Fort Nelson Public Library
  - [Northern Routes Discovery Pass](#), Prince George Public Library

If you were to spend a few days in our community you would see that the library is truly the hub of our community. It serves all ages, socioeconomic groups and cultures. It provides a huge range of free resources and diverse programming “to empower and inspire a creative and literate community” and “nurture the social, cultural and economic success of our community in a spirit of reading, learning and discovery.” (Chetwynd Public Library vision and mission)

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 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,

Dana Bergen

Board Chair

Chetwynd Public Library