

June 24, 2019

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
c/o Parliamentary Committees Office
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Regarding 2020 BC Government Budget Priorities

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the North Vancouver City Library Board of Trustees, I wish to bring to your immediate attention the importance of provincial support for public libraries. Committed to inclusion and equity, public libraries provide 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 where all British Columbians are welcome, regardless of means or membership.

We know that public libraries significantly contribute to the government's goals to make life more affordable, improve services, and build a strong, sustainable and innovative economy for all British Columbians.

Across the 247 public library service points serving BC, we are making a difference to community social and economic development and individual well-being. For example, at the North Vancouver City Library:

- We have made "Honouring Indigenous Perspectives" a strategic priority in our 2018-2021 Strategic Plan and are actively seeking to make connections, build relationships, open dialogue and advance the TRC Calls to Action.
- We ensure people can access the information and resources they need to learn new skills, start or grow a business, connect to government services and pursue personal passions with rich collections, expert staff and connectivity that bridges the digital divide.
- We welcome newcomers to our community, providing services in fourteen languages, supporting integration and building connections through the Library Champions program.
- We promote community belonging and connectedness, creating opportunities for intergenerational and intercultural learning, such as through our Library Small Grants.
- We help families to thrive and discover the joy of reading together through programs like Parent-Child Mother Goose and library storytimes that support childhood and family development.

- We partner with over ninety community organizations, businesses and educational institutions to share information, collaborate on programming, and connect residents with the resources they need.

The Select Standing Committee will be aware of the important role of public libraries based on annual UBCM resolutions on provincial public library funding, as well as the compelling stories and evidence annually submitted to this committee by public library trustees and staff, community members, and local government officials across the province.

In 2017 the provincial government, in response to 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.

The North Vancouver City Library Board of Trustees urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to act on our shared understanding that provincial government financial support is critical to the success of public libraries and their positive impact on BC communities.

While libraries appreciate the stability of grant funding provided since 2010 (approximately \$14 million per year), the lack of regular increases means that each year libraries receive less support, due to inflationary pressures. 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, public libraries have received no increase to funding for the past decade.

This year we are asking the provincial government for \$20 million for public libraries in 2020 as this will help address chronic under-funding and the lack of inflationary increases.

Your attention to this urgent issue is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Stephen Smith, Chair
North Vancouver City Library Board of Trustees

cc: Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education
MLA Bowinn Ma, MLA North Vancouver – Lonsdale
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 Millisp, Executive Director, BC Libraries Cooperative