



Smithers Public Library
PO Box 55, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0
July 18, 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 Smithers Public Library Board.

We are asking the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to recommend to the provincial government that \$20 million for public libraries be committed in the 2020 budget and onwards. This will help address under-funding, historical lack of increases for inflation, and past government cuts.

For all Libraries, and especially small Libraries, the inability to keep pace with inflation and growing community needs has meant diminished service and missed opportunities. With increased funding Libraries can provide comprehensive services for all community members. Libraries contribute significantly towards provincial goals: making life more affordable for British Columbians through free access to information, social and learning opportunities; improving services to communities by working with local providers to extend their reach; and supporting the skills needed to build a strong, sustainable and innovative economy for all British Columbians.

Across 247 public library service points in BC, Libraries are making a difference to community social and economic development and to individual well-being.

Examples from the Smithers Public Library include, but are not limited to:

- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the TRC Calls to Action:
 - [An evening with Bob Joseph, 21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act](#),
 - [Truth and Reconciliation in Our Community](#)
 - [Witsuwit'en Language Workshops](#)

- People accessing the information and resources they need for personal enjoyment, learning new skills, starting a local business, and connecting with government services, with the help of expert library staff:
 - [Computer tutoring](#)
 - Examination invigilation
 - Welcoming spaces and services for forest fire evacuees, such as replacement of Library cards, family programming, and kids being able to continue their involvement and learning with the Summer Reading Club.

- Community members with varied needs and backgrounds learning together:
 - [Teen Dungeons & Dragons](#) and [Library VolunTeens](#)
 - [Pride Storytime](#) & [Smithers Community Pride Celebration](#)
 - Ongoing presentations regarding diverse issues and topics

- Families thriving through attending programs that support childhood and family development and introduce the joy of reading:
 - [BC Summer Reading Club, Tween Tuesdays, & Summer Munchkin Storytime](#)
 - [Campfire Cookout & Singalong](#)
 - [LEGO Time](#)

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. Libraries, and the Smithers Public Library, are falling behind in their ability to meet ongoing and growing community needs.

The Smithers Public Library Board urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to act on our shared behalf since provincial government financial support is critical to the successful continuance of public libraries and their positive impact on BC communities.

Your attention to this urgent issue is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Wally Bergen

Chair, Smithers Public Library Board

CC:

Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education

Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development

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