Letterhead, if applicable

June \*\*, 2020

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

**Regarding 2021 BC Government Budget Priorities**

Dear Committee Members,

This submission is on behalf of the [organization, board, library].

We would like to thank the provincial government for the leadership it has shown helping people in British Columbia navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every day in our communities, we see first-hand the need for strong public services and social infrastructure. Throughout this crisis, B.C. public libraries have continued to serve communities by assisting those most vulnerable to access government forms and assistance; by providing entertainment and connection to those who feel isolated; and by ensuring equitable access to online resources and learning opportunities that our communities rely on for today and for their future well-being. For all British Columbians, public libraries make life more affordable, improve access to services that people count on, and support the development and rebuilding of strong and sustainable economies.

**In times of economic upheaval and uncertainty, public libraries are critically important community infrastructure.**

In March 2020, the Province announced a one-time infusion of $3 million for public libraries across B.C. We were heartened by this announcement and these funds. This one-time grant will assist public libraries to implement technology and resources to better support communities during and post COVID-19. And yet, more still needs to be done so that public libraries can meet the increasingly complex demands of their communities, and support the recently released *B.C.’s Strategic Plan for Public Library Service.*

We realize there are immense pressures on all levels of government and we appreciate that this year there will be many compelling demands on the 2021 budget. Public libraries are also in need, and have not seen an increase in core provincial funding since 2010. It is imperative that the provincial government demonstrate a commitment in the 2021 budget that addresses this growing gap in provincial funding to public libraries and the need for reliable and sustained annual funding increases.

While the public library community continues to advocate for sustained and reliable annual increases to the provincial operating grant for public libraries, this year, as a demonstrated commitment from the provincial government and in support of our shared strategic goals, we are asking for a one-time $3 million investment in province wide training and professional development for public library staff and boards.

2020 has been an unprecedented period of uncertainty for British Columbians and the 2021 budget will, of necessity, be concerned with rebuilding local economies and the well-being of individuals, families, and communities throughout B.C. Public libraries, like other critically important public services, are an integral part of BC community social and economic infrastructure and as such are in need of provincial support and investment.

**Investing in B.C. public libraries is investing in B.C. communities for everyone.**

Sincerely,

(name and if applicable position in organization or library)

CC:

Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education

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