

## **Platform Submission from the BC Public Library Partners - October 2020**

The BC Public Library Partners (BCPLP) advocate on behalf of public libraries in British Columbia. The Partners are a collaborative effort representing the major voices in the public library sector: the Association of BC Public Library Directors, the BC Library Association, the BC Libraries Cooperative and the BC Library Trustees Association.

For the 2020 provincial election, we have two platform requests:

**1. A sustained, ongoing increase to the public library annual operating grants to \$20 million a year. Moving forward, we also ask that the increase be tied to inflation.**

- a. The current provincial annual operating grants to public libraries total \$14 million. While this amount has not changed in over 10 years, community needs, new service demands and inflation has put constraints on the budgets for public libraries. This request for sustained increased funding was supported by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services as part of the Budget 2020 Consultation process.

**2. A one-time \$35 million COVID recovery fund for public libraries across BC.**

- a. Public libraries play an important role in the ongoing health and learning of communities. This has never been more true than during the pandemic. Libraries have pivoted to providing even more online services, programming and resources, minimizing the impact of social isolation. Libraries are offering curbside pickup of materials, and expanded delivery to homebound seniors and community members. Libraries have boosted access to wifi and found creative ways to connect their communities to the wider world of job opportunities and government information and support.
- b. This essential work has put a tremendous strain on all 71 public libraries in BC. This strain is made even more difficult with the budget constraints being placed on municipalities, the loss of and reconfiguration of facility space, and the impacts of COVID safety protocols.
- c. Public libraries recognize our duty and role in helping BC recover. Given one-time funding, we have a number of ideas for how to deliver even better service for British Columbians:
  - i. Community Events, Programming & Outreach
    - Boost our existing virtual programming on skill building, mental health, job seeking, and using technology
    - Augment our outreach services through innovative approaches like community service kiosks

- ii. Resources
  - Increase access to e-resources, particularly those that help public libraries support learning (K-12, re-skilling, post-secondary)
- iii. Facilities
  - To meet COVID protocols, rent larger indoor spaces for library programming in winter, build or expand outside spaces by using hardwalled tents and heaters, and modify large meeting rooms so they're available for in-person uses like students using wifi or studying.
- iv. Technology
  - Increase hotspot, laptop, device lending
  - Increase bandwidth and expand public computer access

The work of public libraries across BC is inspired and informed by a shared commitment to access, equity, diversity, reconciliation, and life-long learning. We know public libraries are critical infrastructure across BC communities, and we know that public libraries will play a key role in helping our communities recover towards a stronger future.

Thank you,

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