

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services: Annual Budget Consultation

Key Messages

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the importance and value of public libraries in British Columbia.
- We are grateful to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for the annual grants public libraries receive that supplement local funding.
- We are also grateful for the one time technology grant we received last year from the Ministry of Education. This has allowed some libraries to improve their connectivity infrastructure and increase access to digital resources, an important boost for British Columbians who have been home bound and looking for new jobs and/or government support.
- We're here today because public libraries require continuous and increasing investment to provide opportunities for life-long learning, connectivity, reconciliation, equity and social inclusion, and to create communities that are healthier, more affordable and able to recover economically from COVID. All of this work that public libraries do every day supports and aligns with government priorities.
- *(Share a story from your library about 1 or 2 of the ways your library aligns with one of the government priorities mentioned above.)*
- While one time grants are helpful and appreciated, the vast majority of impact that public libraries make happens through their core services - the resources, programs and learning opportunities that are made possible from operational funding. Libraries can't maintain or improve on these core services, which are meeting government priorities, without an increase to operating funding.
- Since 2010, public library supporters have asked that the provincial government provide funding for public libraries that, at a minimum, includes annual increases to account for inflation. Despite these requests, public libraries have been left with chronic provincial underfunding at approximately \$14 million/year, resulting in a decade with no increase to core provincial funding to the sector.
- Meanwhile we are doing more with less - communities are getting larger, community requests for support and resources from their local libraries are increasing, and the cost of doing business in these communities is exponentially growing.
- *(Share a story about how your library is doing more with less.)*

- Over the past decade, provincial funding for public libraries has declined as a portion of total revenue allocated to individual BC library systems, from 7% in 2009 to 4.6% in 2019. In that same time period, the municipal portion has risen from 72% to 80%.
- While both levels of government have multiple and increasing service demands on them, municipalities have much more restricted revenue options open to them than does the province.
- Stagnant provincial funding shifts costs to municipalities, which is doubly hard in a time when the demands on municipal services continue to increase.
- That's why we are asking the provincial government for \$22 million for public libraries in 2022, and we also ask that the increase be tied to inflation.
- This request for sustained, increased funding was supported by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services as part of the Budget 2020 and 2021 Consultation process.
- In conclusion, we ask that the BC government commit to increasing library funding to a minimum of \$22 million annually to reflect inflationary and population increases and recommit to a progressive funding approach, reflecting the modern role of public libraries in achieving the goals of the Province and our communities.
- Thank you for your time today.

FAQ

1. **Why \$22 million in 2022?**

This number is an estimate of the current funding levels public libraries would receive if inflation had kept up to provincial funding for the sector since 2009.

2. **How was the statistic about the declining provincial funding calculated?**

Using publicly available data on funding, reported on the Public Libraries Branch website

3. **How much funding do libraries receive now?**

The total allocation is \$14 million. The exact funding each library receives varies greatly and is allocated using a formula created by the Public Libraries Branch.

4. **Where does the current funding come from?**

Most libraries receive a combination of provincial grant(s), municipal funding, district funding, and some outside grants.