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Vancouver Public Library  
*Office of the Chair*

July 13, 2020

Dear Library Staff,

Tomorrow, after four months of closure, the Vancouver Public Library re-opens five of its locations and expands takeout services to better meet the needs of our City. Although this is only one step in our graduated re-opening plan, I write on behalf of the Library Board to celebrate this important milestone with you and to thank you for helping us reach it.

In many ways it may still feel difficult to celebrate. The past months have been sombre for most of us and that can make it challenging to recognize the joy in tomorrow's accomplishment. It has been a time of profound sorrow, in grieving the loss of lives to the pandemic and the temporary loss of our ways of living. It has been a time of frustration, as we recognize the deep divisions that have grown among us and the endless need to fight for racial justice and equity. And increasingly it has been a time of dismay, as we see, in certain places near and far, science and truth succumbing to opinions and fear.

It is precisely in times like these that Libraries are needed most. The work you do each day chips away at the problems our communities face. Libraries empower us to keep ourselves and our families safe through knowledge and reliable information. Libraries expand our minds with truth and compassion by giving us the opportunity to learn from and about those that differ from ourselves. Libraries reconnect us when we've been socially and physically isolated for too long. Libraries lift our hearts with literature, poetry and art when we so desperately need levity and entertainment. Re-opening Libraries is an essential step towards our community recovering and growing in these challenging times.

Yet, the Library could not accomplish any of these things without you. Our dedicated Library Staff form the foundation of our work and our success. I want to acknowledge that the past months have been challenging for many of you too. You've faced the uncertainty of not knowing how, or when, Library operations would resume. Many of you have borne a significant financial burden from the loss of work and faced incredible disruptions to your lives and plans. I also recognize that our gradual re-opening means that not everyone has returned to work yet and that some of you continue to await recall. We recognize these hardships and commit to continuing to do all we can to advocate for your safe return to work. Board members have and will continue to take every opportunity to remind our City leaders of the vitally important work that you do in support of our community and in helping us all rise from the challenges we face.

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Vancouver Public Library

This pandemic has called upon all of us to demonstrate compassion, resilience and courage. I want to thank Library Staff who, with creativity and determination, continued to deliver and expand the Library's digital and remote services during this period. In the face of sudden changes and stresses brought on by the pandemic, both at work and outside of work, you kept us going. With every online program delivered, e-book loaned, inquiry answered, and tweet posted, you conveyed on our behalf, "VPL is still here, and we are here to stay."

As we progress through the phases of VPL's re-opening together, thank you for your patience and your commitment to the Library. I also want to thank, especially, Kari Scott-Whyte and other representatives of CUPE 391 for sharing your concerns with us and for working together with our management team to ensure that we re-open to a workplace where all of us can succeed. We continue to learn and improve together.

Tomorrow's re-opening marks a new beginning. While there is certainly much more to do ahead of us, I want to sincerely thank you, and to celebrate this moment with you. When you return to the Library, whether that's tomorrow or later in our graduated re-opening plan, I want you to know that your work is crucial to the recovery and revival of our City. It's been said that Libraries are "hospitals for the soul" – thank you for the healing work you do for our community.

With gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the Board,

Jennifer Chan  
VPL Board Chair

she/her/hers

Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

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