



Vancouver Public Library  
*Office of the Chair*

April 3, 2018

The Honourable Rob Fleming  
Minister of Education  
P.O. Box 9045, Stn. Prov. Govt.  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fleming:

RE: Response to Union of B.C. Municipalities Resolution on Public Library Funding

We would like to thank the Ministry of Education for considering the public library funding framework in British Columbia. Like other urban libraries in B.C. and across Canada, Vancouver Public Library has expanded its digital collections in recent years to include streaming film, television and music, building on already strong collections of ebooks and digital research collections. This expansion has been possible through the continued strong support of our municipal government. Libraries in smaller municipalities and rural areas cannot afford comparable access and continue to feel the impact of cuts to province-wide digital resources made in 2009.

In addition to digital collections, which vary based on funding, libraries across the province provide support for digital literacy, ensuring that our patrons can access government services, find and be prepared for employment and connect with family and community through online tools. These are critical skills for our digital environment and supported at libraries across B.C. Many patrons rely on public libraries for access to computers and an Internet connection, for tasks that cannot be completed on a smartphone and because they do not have computers with Internet at home. At Vancouver Public Library, we saw 1.2 million uses of our computers in 2017, and 6.4 million visits to our digital services. The limitations of broadband access in B.C. have been recognized by the province and are being addressed through the connectivity project, however, as this significant infrastructure continues to develop, it is public libraries that fill the gap for British Columbians.

While the digital environment is a vital part of library service, the physical spaces of our libraries are important to bring community members together to learn and share. They build community

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connectedness and reduce the isolation that can occur in a digital environment. Vancouver Public Library welcomed 6.4 million visitors to its locations in 2017, and our programs received 250,000 attendees, including 198,000 at programs for children such as early literacy activities. These activities depend on libraries' physical spaces. We ask the Ministry of Education to consider the full range of library services in the funding review, recognizing that additional funding is required to support libraries as community facilities and to keep pace with increasing costs.

Further, we remain deeply concerned about the lack of sustainable non-charitable public library services for people living in First Nations communities in B.C. The establishment of provincial policy for the delivery of public library services in First Nation communities, by First Nation communities, is required. Many of these communities have few to no library services, and this gap inhibits opportunities for them to learn, discover and create – opportunities available to other British Columbians.

Vancouver Public Library's trustees recognize the vital role that British Columbia's public library system plays in supporting lifelong learning and community connectedness, and encourage the Ministry of Education to consider increased funding in your review.

Yours sincerely,



Kyla Epstein  
Chair, VPL Board

cc: Mari Martin, Director, Libraries Branch  
Gregor Robertson, Mayor, City of Vancouver