



Vancouver Public Library

Office of the Chair

October 12, 2018

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
c/o Parliamentary Committees Office
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Canada

Dear Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services:

Re: 2019 Budget Consultation

We are writing on behalf of the Vancouver Public Library Board (VPL) to share the Library Board's priorities for consideration by the Committee for the 2019 Provincial budget. We thank you for leading this consultation process and for seeking feedback from the community to inform budget deliberations.

Provincial Funding

Libraries appreciate the stability of grant funding that the government has provided since 2010 (approximately \$14 million per year), however, the lack of indexing to inflation means that libraries are falling behind in their ability to provide the information and connections that people count on from libraries across the province. Indexing the annual per capita operating grants to CPI would ensure a basic level of support for all public libraries and the communities they serve. The existing Provincial per capita grants to public libraries in British Columbia are one of the lowest across all of the Provinces and are critical to the basic operations of British Columbia's libraries, ensuring that every community can tackle poverty and inequality through equitable access to public libraries.

Vancouver Public Library values the role that provincial funding can play in ensuring equity of digital access for all British Columbians. In 2009, the Province eliminated funding for core digital

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resources that were available to every community member through public libraries across British Columbia. Whether the community was large or small, a core set of digital resources were available to every individual using library technology or through their home internet connections. These digital newspapers, magazine articles and ebooks ensured that communities across British Columbia had the information and resources that they needed to encourage literacy and support a strong, sustainable, innovative economy that works for everyone. Vancouver Public Library calls on the Province to restore funding for a core set of digital resources, selected in consultation with public libraries across the province.

Connectivity

The continuing challenge in connecting rural and remote communities with high-speed internet inhibits our collective ability to achieve equity between rural and urban centres. Connectivity is critical in the digital age, yet adequate broadband is always in short supply or cost-prohibitive. Public Libraries ensure digital inclusion, and libraries throughout the province face both rising costs and rising demand. The Province must ensure that all libraries and communities have access to affordable high-speed internet access.

Public Library Service for First Nations Communities

We remain deeply concerned about the lack of sustainable non-charitable public library services for people living in B.C.'s First Nations communities. Access to reading and knowledge should not be a charitable endeavour – it is a right shared by all in Canada and should be a part of equitable public service for all British Columbians. Provincial Government leadership to support libraries in connecting and collaborating with local First Nations to identify options for library service that are the best fit for their community members would support the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

Provincial Support for Library Boards

Adequate provincial funding and support for strong, effective and equitable library board development throughout the province is valuable and necessary. Provincial funding and resources for trustee orientation, learning and development aligns with the Ministry's responsibilities to uphold the Library Act. Vancouver Public Library believes that strong and effective library boards support strong and effective public libraries.



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Summary

We understand the fiscal pressures facing government. However, we nonetheless urge you to acknowledge British Columbia's public libraries' unique and distinct role in community development in three ways:

- 1) Provide Provincial funding that, at a minimum, includes annual increases to account for inflation and restores provincial funding for province-wide digital resources.
- 2) Ensure digital inclusion by ensuring affordable high-speed internet is available to all public libraries and communities in British Columbia
- 3) Support public library service for First Nations Communities through resources that help libraries and First Nations communities collaborate to identify options that are the best fit for their community members.

Thank you for your review of our submission. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share the Vancouver Public Library Board's priorities and wish you and your colleagues well as you continue to work to balance the budget in challenging economic times.

Yours truly,

Kyla Epstein, Chair
Vancouver Public Library Board

Christina de Castell
Chief Librarian

Cc:

Hon. Rob Fleming, Minister of Education
Hon. George Heyman, MLA Vancouver – Fairview
Sam Sullivan, MLA Vancouver – False Creek

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