October 5, 2015

Mayor and Council
City of Vancouver
453 W 12th Ave
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Re: TRC Recommendations

Dear Mayor Robertson and City Council:

At our July 22, 2015 meeting, the VPL Board unanimously passed the following motion:

THAT the Board request a report from staff in the fall of 2015 containing recommendations on how to move forward on the actions recommended by TRC that are within the library board’s jurisdiction to act.

The Library Board appreciates City Council’s vision of and commitment to reconciliation and is committed to mirroring that commitment at the Library.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Lynn Baum
Chair
VPL Board of Trustees
VPL

Vancouver Public Library
Office of the Chair

October 5, 2015

Mayor and Council
City of Vancouver
453 W 12th Ave
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Re: Living Wage

Dear Mayor Robertson and City Council:

I am pleased to note for you that at our July 22, 2015 meeting, the Vancouver Public Library Board unanimously passed the following motion:

   THAT the Vancouver Public Library Board affirm its commitment to have the Vancouver Public Library to be certified a living wage employer by the Living Wage for Families Campaign and direct staff to report back on the steps necessary to achieve that goal.

The Library Board appreciates City Council’s vision of and commitment to becoming a Living Wage employer and is committed to mirroring that commitment as an employer as well.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Lynn Baum
Chair
VPL Board of Trustees
October 13, 2015

Select Standing Committee
on Finance and Government Services
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Hamilton, Ms. James, and Committee Members:

Re: 2016 Budget Consultation

I am writing on behalf of the Vancouver Public Library Board (VPL) to share the Board’s priorities for the 2016 Provincial budget. We thank you for leading this consultation process and for seeking feedback from the community to inform budget deliberations.

Investment in Innovation

In the past year, we have seen Provincial Governments in other provinces, such as Alberta and Ontario, recognize the critical role that public libraries play as accessible platforms for innovation and creativity through increased investments in public libraries. Through the services libraries provide – such as access to information and expertise, access to the Internet and the digital world, public space, literacy and digital skills development, and information support – BC’s public libraries are critical knowledge and social infrastructure that not only support social sustainability broadly, but also create the conditions that incubate creativity and innovation.

We have also seen from a variety of economic impact studies over the years – both our own study, Bringing Perspective to the Value of the Vancouver Public Library, and Toronto Public Library’s recent study So Much More – that public library service more than pays for itself in the individual and community net benefits they provide to local communities. In short, public libraries provide benefits that far out value the costs in running them.

The existing Provincial per capita grants to public libraries, while one of the lowest across all of the Provinces, are critical to the basic operations of British Columbian libraries. A modest increase in investment in BC’s public libraries – even short-term innovation funding – would
allow BC’s network of public libraries to make even greater contributions to communities across this Province. As well, indexing the per capita grant to CPI would be very welcome.

Public Library Service for First Nations Communities

As you may know, there are a number of charitable endeavours that seek to create public libraries in British Columbia’s First Nations communities. While these are heartwarming efforts, 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 Canadians and should be a part of equitable public service for all British Columbians. Provincial Government leadership in this area would be very welcome and highly regarded.

Rural Broadband

The continuing challenge in connecting rural and remote communities with broadband is concerning and will inhibit our collective ability to achieve true connectivity and information equity between rural and urban centres. It was with great enthusiasm that we attended the recent Telus announcement regarding their infrastructure investments in British Columbia. Premier Clark’s remarks at that announcement were inspiring and progressive. Continued Provincial leadership in the area of rural Broadband would be most welcome.

Summary

We, of course, 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 four ways:

1. Attach CPI increases to the annual per capita operating funding.
2. Implement a library line item in order to provide a transparent accounting of library funding and to signal a public recognition of the unique role public libraries play in British Columbia.
3. Increase the investment in British Columbia’s public libraries in order to expand on their role as platforms for innovation.
4. Explore the provision of publicly funded library services for First Nations communities.
5. Continue to provide leadership in achieving an extensive rural broadband network.
Thank you for your review of our submission. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share our priorities and wish you and your colleagues well as you continue to work to balance the budget in challenging economic times.

Yours truly,

Mary Lynn Baum, Chair
Vancouver Public Library Board

Sandra Singh
Chief Librarian