



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

1580 West Broadway

Vancouver, B.C. V6J 5K8

Telephone: 604-713-5000

July 4, 2019

Honourable Minister Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn. Prov Govt
Victoria, BC VBW 9E2

Dear Minister Fleming,

Re: Annual Library Funding

At the June 24, 2019 Vancouver Board of Education meeting, Trustees passed the following motion:

That the Vancouver School Board writes letter to Minister Fleming supporting an increase in Annual Library funding from \$14 million to \$20 million.

This action by the Board of Education was prompted by the attached report from the Vancouver Public Library in which they provide information on their \$20 million in 2020 campaign for provincial library funding organized by BC Library Partners. Restoring funding for public libraries back to 2008 levels, when it was \$18 million annually, and increasing it to \$20 million would reflect government's commitment to this important public service. As the funding for public libraries is part of the Ministry of Education's budget, I encourage you to include this request as an important component of your Ministry's budget submission for the next government year.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Janet Fraser'.

Janet Fraser
Chairperson

Attachment

cc: VBE Trustees
Suzanne Hoffman, Superintendent of Schools
J. David Green, Secretary Treasurer

Board of Education Trustees:

Janet Fraser – Board Chair

Allan Wong – Vice-Chair

Fraser Ballantyne Lois Chan-Pedley Carmen Cho

Estrellita Gonzalez Oliver Hanson

Barb Parrott Jennifer Reddy



Vancouver Public Library

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: June 19, 2019
Author: Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian
Phone No.: 604-331-4007
VanDocs#: DOC/2019/158465
Meeting Date: June 26, 2019

TO: Library Board
FROM: Kurt Heinrich, Chair, Community Relations, Planning & Development Committee
SUBJECT: **\$20 Million in 2020 Provincial Library Campaign**

SUMMARY

This report provides information about the \$20 Million in 2020 campaign for provincial library funding organized by the BC Library Partners, and recommendations for VPL participation.

PURPOSE

This report is for decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the Board approve sending a letter to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services: Annual Budget Consultation; and

THAT trustees contact MLAs to discuss provincial funding.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Trustees sought clarification on some items in the report including campaign key messages and clarity about the impact on libraries if we do not receive the increased funding, and discussed the issues of increasing inflationary pressure and population. Staff identified the background

material that was included to support conversations with MLAs and Council liaisons on this topic, particularly to answer specific questions that may arise.

BACKGROUND

Public libraries in British Columbia are governed by the provincial Library Act. The Province of British Columbia provides \$14 million in grants to libraries annually. There are 71 public libraries in BC, with 247 locations. The amount has declined since 2008, when it was \$18 million (in unadjusted dollars).

Over the last several years, the Library Partners (ABCPLD, BCLA, BCLTA and BCLC) have made concerted efforts to appeal to the provincial government for increased funding. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services made specific recommendations for public libraries. While these recommendations increased understanding of the need for adequate and reliable provincial funding for public libraries, they did not result in increased funding.

In fall 2018, the Library Partners, with the support of Ministry of Education staff, submitted a proposal for \$2.1M to support digital literacy initiatives across the province. Despite the Ministry of Education receiving increased funding of \$550M for 2019/2020, the digital literacy proposal remains unfunded and the total grant allocation for public libraries was not increased. In addition, due to changes to the grant allocation formulas, many individual public library grants have decreased.

BC Funding History and Structure

Over the last decade, the decisions of provincial governments have disadvantaged public libraries in the following ways:

- 1) Deleting the libraries funding line from the provincial budget and categorizing the funding as “transfers to other partners” in the overall Ministry of Education budget;
- 2) Not approving any increases in funding to public libraries since 2005, resulting in libraries absorbing inflationary increases year over year;
- 3) Removing public libraries as eligible institutions for physical infrastructure grants; and
- 4) Releasing a strategic plan, Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities, that was an enabling framework but had no funding attached to it or designated resources for implementation.

The cumulative effects of these decisions have resulted in an inequity of service across the Province, aging physical infrastructure, reductions in service levels, and inadequate

technological infrastructure to meet the public demand. Over the same time period, use of public libraries has increased. Many rural public libraries are economically vulnerable and offer limited service hours. Particularly in smaller communities, sufficient revenue cannot be expected to come from local sources.

VPL Funding and Council Proposed Resolution

In April, staff advised that VPL had received the Provincial Grant allocation letter dated March 26, 2019 and learned that the amount granted to VPL in 2019 was \$1,240,007, a variance of \$76,293 or 5.8% from the budgeted amount for 2019, and a reduction of \$49,755 or 3.9% from 2018. This reduces the provincial contribution from 2.43% of the overall VPL annual operating budget to 2.29%.

The Community Relations, Planning and Development Committee discussed the reduction in the Provincial grant, and recommended that the VPL Board take steps to seek increased funding for libraries, through drafting a proposed resolution for the Union of BC Municipalities, and discussing the issue with MLAs.

DISCUSSION

Following the Board's discussion in April, Councillor Christine Boyle submitted the following resolution to Council, which will be discussed on June 25:

Motion: Restoring Provincial Library Funding
Submitted by: Councillor Boyle

WHEREAS public libraries require continuous and increasing investment to provide opportunities for life-long learning, increase equity and social inclusion, and create cities that are healthier and more affordable;

WHEREAS provincial funding for public libraries has declined in the past decade as a portion of total revenue allocated to individual BC library systems, from 7% to 4.6%, while the municipal portion has risen from 72% to 80%.

AND WHEREAS this decline in provincial funding reflects a regressive approach of shifting cost to municipal property tax payers;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

That the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write a letter to Minister Fleming asking that the BC Government restore library funding to a minimum of \$20 million annually to reflect inflationary and population increases and recommit to a progressive funding approach, reflecting the role of public libraries in achieving the goals of the Province and our communities.

That this motion be forwarded to UBCM, asking:

That UBCM strongly advocate that the BC Government restore library funding to a minimum of \$20 million annually to reflect inflationary and population increases and recommit to a progressive funding approach, reflecting the role of public libraries in achieving the goals of the Province and our communities.

\$20 Million in 2020 Campaign

Since April, the BC Library Partners have organized a campaign “\$20 Million in 2020” and are seeking library participation:

- A backgrounder on the provincial funding from the BC Library Partners is provided for trustees as Appendix A.
- Staff have provided a recommended letter on behalf of the Board for the Board chair to send as part of the Annual Budget Consultation, based on the template from the BC Library Partners, attached as Appendix B.
- An additional VPL backgrounder is provided for trustees to use in discussing this issue with MLAs, attached as Appendix C.
- The Chief Librarian has proposed a session on libraries for UBCM, attached as Appendix D.
- The Role of the Libraries Branch is described in Appendix E.

The deadline for VPL to send the letter for the Annual Budget Consultation is 5pm on Friday, June 28, 2019, and UBCM takes place from September 23-27, 2019 in Vancouver.

FINAL REMARKS

Provincial funding for libraries has been static for many years, increasing the pressure on the City of Vancouver and the Library’s limited revenue options to address inflationary pressure and demand for new and expanded services.



APPENDIX A

BC Public Library Partners' Backgrounder: Public Library Funding in British Columbia

Compiled by Kevin Millsip,
Executive Director, BC Libraries Cooperative

There are 71 public library systems in British Columbia serving 99% of the provincial population. The responsibility for the *Libraries Act* is held by the Ministry of Education and is executed through the [Libraries Branch](#). BC public libraries receiving funding from the province, local and regional governments, and other various grants.

The current annual amount of provincial funding for Public Libraries in BC is \$14 million. From that \$14million, \$2,240,550 is allocated to various partner organizations or library federations which provide services and support for public libraries.

That leaves \$11,759,450 of provincial funding to be allocated directly to libraries in BC. This funding is allocated to public libraries on a per capita basis.

Public Library Funding Background

In fiscal year (FY) 09/10 provincial public library funding was reduced from a total of \$17.9M to a total of \$13.7M, a 25% reduction from FY08/09;

In FY12/13, the public library budget sub-vote was eliminated from the provincial budget; status quo funding was amalgamated within the Ministry of Education's main sub-vote;

The Government made a small increase in the annual allocation, to \$14M which was annually allocated in FY12/13, FY 13/14, FY 14/15, FY15/16, FY16/17, FY17/18, FY18/19 and FY19/20;

Documents distributed at lockup 2016 indicated status quo (\$14M annual) funding would be allocated to the public library sector in each of FY16/17, 17/18 and 18/19;

Through to FY19/20, the public library sector has received status quo funding of \$14M annually for eight consecutive budgets.

During the 10-year period between 09/10 -19/20, inflation in BC totalled 15.58%. If the provincial Public Library funding high of \$17.9M/yr had been maintained and, if annual inflation increases had been added to that funding envelope, annual provincial funding for public libraries would now equal \$20,688,820.

Draft Letter for Budget Consultation from VPL Board Chair

June 26, 2019

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Re: 2020 BC Government Budget Priorities

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the Board of Vancouver Public Library, I ask for your support in providing \$20 million in provincial funding for public libraries across BC in 2020.

Provincial funding for public libraries was cut 25%, from \$18 million in 2008 to \$14 million in 2009, and has been frozen since. At the same time, BC's population has grown 13% and the consumer price index for recreation, education and reading has risen 12.7%. BC libraries are doing more with less, but service levels are not sustainable. Erosion of funding forces libraries to reduce service hours, staff and programs that support citizens across the province.

Public libraries are becoming ever more important to BC communities, not less. They offer more than books: they help prepare children for success, support the most vulnerable, and enable opportunity for everyone, including newcomers.

Public libraries are the only public institutions that are truly equitable in providing services for all British Columbians so that they may participate in, and benefit from, the social and economic development of their communities. Public libraries are also the only freely accessible public spaces for all British Columbians to connect with, learn about, and experience, the advantages of living in this province.

Public libraries significantly contribute to the government's goals for making life more affordable, improving services, and building a strong, sustainable and innovative economy for all British Columbians.

We appreciate the government's recognition of the public library funding issue. In 2017 the provincial government, in response to UBCM Resolution B60, acknowledged that the cost of delivering public library services has increased with changing technology and other demands. We are heartened that we all share the understanding of the need for adequate and reliable provincial funding for public libraries.

Across the 247 public library service points serving BC we are making a difference to community social and economic development and individual well-being through:

- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the TRC Calls to Action. In Vancouver, these include the [Indigenous Storyteller in Residence](#) program, and [materials for all ages](#) which build understanding of Indigenous history and culture. These collections, available at all 21 VPL locations, include titles that reflect the impact of residential schools and the theme of reconciliation.
- People accessing the information and resources they need for personal enjoyment and life needs, learning new skills, starting a local business, and connecting with government services, with the help of expert library staff and connectivity that bridges the continued digital divide. In Vancouver, this includes providing [909,000 hours of computer time annually](#) for those who need it most, [online resources like Lynda.com](#) for learning digital skills; [Accessible Services](#), which serves vulnerable seniors and library users with mobility challenges and/or print disabilities; and more than 2,000 programs for adults to learn new skills, explore ideas and connect with their community, delivered for free by staff and partners annually.
- Newcomers finding welcoming services and support for integration, such as the [Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre](#) and [New-to-BC: The Library Link for Newcomers](#), as well as options in Vancouver including ESL conversation circles, book clubs, and collections in 17 languages.
- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development, offered through more than 6,000 programs for children and teens, including storytimes for babies, toddlers, and families; book clubs, and programs like the [BC Summer Reading Club](#).

Since 2009 the public library community has requested funding that, at a minimum, includes annual increases to account for inflation. Despite these repeated requests, for the past decade public libraries have received no increase to funding.

The Vancouver Public Library Board urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to endorse provincial government funding of \$20 million for public libraries in 2020 to address the chronic under-funding, lack of increases for inflation, and past government cuts.

Your attention to this urgent issue is appreciated.

Sincerely,

John Schaub,
Chair, VPL Board

cc: Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education
The BC Public Library Partners:
Scott Hargrove, Chair, Association of BC Public Library Directors
Babs Kelly, Executive Director, BC Library Trustees Association
Annette DeFaveri, Executive Director, BC Library Association
Kevin Millsip, Executive Director, BC Libraries Cooperative

Library Funding in BC - Background

Provincial funding to public libraries was cut 25%, from \$18 million in 2008 to \$14 million in 2009, and has been frozen since. At the same time, BC's population has grown 13%¹ and the consumer price index for recreation, education and reading has risen 12.66%². These pressures compound the funding gap.

Had provincial funding for libraries been indexed to inflation and reflected population growth, the 2019 budget would be over \$20 million.

The BC government holds responsibility for the Libraries Act through the Ministry of Education, executed by the Libraries Branch. The majority of the \$14 million funding is allocated to 71 public libraries on a per capita basis. BC public libraries depend on this funding to ensure a baseline of connectivity and access for all citizens in BC.

Between 2008 and 2018, the Ministry of Education budget increased from \$5.67B to \$6.34B, a 12% increase. In 2019, it announced a further increase of \$550M to be added over three years. Provincial library funding has gone from .3% to .2% of the total Ministry budget. Given the critical role libraries play in supporting Ministry goals, this allocation is not adequate.

BC libraries are doing more with less, but service levels are not sustainable. Erosion of funding forces libraries to reduce service hours, staff, and programs that support citizens across the province. Provincial funding previously enabled public libraries to gain economies of scale through province wide subscription to services such as online databases, Canadian newspapers, and health and legal resources. Cuts to provincial funding resulted in cancellation of this type of service, leaving individual libraries to absorb the impact.

Libraries are becoming *more* important to communities, not less. They offer more than books; they help prepare children for success, support the most vulnerable, and enable opportunity for everyone, including newcomers.

Municipalities across BC have recognized the value of the services provided, and many have helped bridge some of the funding gap. But not all are able to, leaving many communities without valuable services.

Downloading provincial costs to municipalities creates inequity and leaves citizens in many communities vulnerable and without core services.

¹ BC Statistics, BC population estimates, 2008 population compared to *estimated* 2019 population (calculated using BC Statistics 2017 estimate, assuming the same percentage increase in 2018 and 2019 as 2017).

² Statistics Canada, 2009 Basket, "Recreation, Education and Reading" component, comparing published fiscal 2008 average to published March 2019.

Vancouver Public Library Perspective

Since 2008, provincial funding received by Vancouver Public Library (VPL) has been reduced by 40%, from \$2.1M to \$1.2M in 2019. VPL relies heavily on the generous support of the City of Vancouver, which has provided municipal operating funding reflecting increased population, costs, and use of the library. However, provincial funding cuts and the erosion of the buying power of status quo funding has necessitated cuts to staff and services.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education Libraries Branch announced a change in methodology for the allocation of provincial library funding. This change has negatively impacted VPL by reducing funding 6% (approx. \$76,000) versus the 2019 budget.

Demands on VPL are ever increasing: since 2008, digital collections have expanded by 283,000 items, and use of the library through combined digital and physical visits has grown by 2.3 million. VPL serves a large and diverse population; in 2018, VPL welcomed over 6.4 million visits across 21 locations and 70% of Vancouver residents reported using a VPL service.

How Do Libraries Support Provincial Priorities?

Success in Education

Libraries ensure children 0-5 develop the early literacy skills that are critical building blocks for life-long health and well-being. Through free story times, parents learn the importance of reading to, and interacting with their children, helping every parent and caregiver enable their child's success, at every income level.

Libraries across BC provide this foundational support for early childhood education. VPL alone delivered 5,810 programs for children in 2018, reaching almost 200,000 children and families.

A return to strong provincial support would ensure every parent and child was connected to the resources libraries offer for children's lifetime success.

Affordability for Everyone

Libraries provide equal access to information and entertainment. For those who can't afford to buy everything they want to experience, libraries provide free programs, access to cultural activities, books, DVDs and online entertainment, often in multiple languages and formats.

Public libraries across BC provided 32,811 programs for children and 25,255 programs for adults, as well as 15.5 million items in their collections, in 2017.

Building Community Connections

Libraries offer a place of refuge for those who need it most. By providing free community spaces for children and families, seniors, and our most vulnerable populations, public libraries help address social isolation across the province.

"I had suffered in decline for many years, and luckily I was able to receive mental health status. I did find myself homeless though, but luckily again I had a car to live in... It helped me to be able to stay warm and dry in the library until 9 p.m. weekdays. I am a printer by trade and surrounded by books was very familiar and comforting. The computers allowed me many hours of online chess. Thank you to many friend(s)!"

— Lee, patron of Renfrew Branch Library

Connectivity & Technology for Poverty Reduction

While most high income households have internet at home, less than two-thirds of Canada's lowest-income households do.³ Government services have moved online, yet those who need the most assistance are the least likely to have the tools and skills they need. Mobile devices are no replacement when confronted with lengthy online forms and complex processes. Public libraries provide free computers with internet, staff who teach digital skills, and referrals for additional support.

When funding doesn't keep up with inflation, libraries are forced to reduce service hours and staffing, which in turn limits access to government services for those who need them the most.

Enabling Opportunity for Job Seekers and Newcomers

Every day, libraries help people who are seeking work – those who are new to BC, those who want to upgrade their skills, and those who are looking to return to work. They offer job search and resume workshops, as well as access to online training resources like lynda.com.

Newcomers to Canada learn English through conversation circles, use materials from books to online language learning, and obtain the tools they need to fully participate in Canadian society. Programs delivered through local libraries, like New to BC and the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre at VPL, helped more than 12,759 newcomers in 2018.

"I just moved to Vancouver recently. Libraries have changed my whole idea about public access. There are many new books to read including ESL books to improve English for someone like me. People who work here are very kind, patient and helpful. I'm a big VPL fan."

When library funding doesn't keep up with inflation, the staff who deliver these services aren't available and libraries' doors are closed more often.

³ <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/policymonitoring/2018/cmr1.htm#i102>

Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Session Proposal

Libraries support resilient communities

Public libraries increase belonging, support affordability, and build resilient communities. Learn how libraries support municipal and provincial priorities, providing critical social infrastructure for families, newcomers and the most vulnerable.

Long description:

Eric Klinenberg in *Palaces for the People* asks “Why have so many public officials and civic leaders failed to recognize the value of libraries and their role in social infrastructure?” Libraries are existing civic amenities found in nearly every community in BC. They build a sense of belonging; support newcomers, families and the most vulnerable; and provide opportunities for everyone to learn and change their lives. Libraries’ ability to carry out these functions depends on municipal and provincial leaders who understand and support their current and evolving services, and recognize that libraries help communities address their most urgent needs.

Join Vancouver, Saanich, and Prince George libraries and trustees, with CUPE BC, to hear how libraries provide critical social infrastructure and the outcomes they achieve, while increasing affordability for everyone.

Panellists:

- Vancouver trustee or councillor, TBD
- Matt Boyd, Trustee (Saanich), Greater Victoria Public Library
- Mike P. Gagel, Chair, Prince George Public Library Board & Chair, BC Library Trustees Association
- Karen Ranalleta, General Vice-President and Chair, Library Committee, CUPE BC
- Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian, Vancouver Public Library

Role of the Libraries Branch

The Libraries Branch provides key leadership and support to public libraries and acts as a liaison with other government departments. Core functions of the Libraries Branch include:

1. LEGISLATION AND POLICY

The Libraries Branch administers, and provides professional advice, on Provincial legislation and policies pertinent to public libraries. The Library Act establishes the governance structure for public libraries and stipulates the powers and duties of Library Boards. Policies such as privacy, copyright, and materials regulation all have implications for library service delivery.

2. PROVINCIAL INVESTMENTS

The Province invests in a variety of shared services, resources and infrastructure that benefit all public libraries and communities. In 2019, the Province granted \$2.24M to Federations, Associations and partners, approximately a \$100,000 increase since 2014. For West Vancouver Memorial Library, the following are of direct benefit to our community:

- Public Library InterLINK: Reciprocal borrowing of physical materials, collaborative grants, group purchasing, collaborative staff development
- BC Libraries Cooperative: Group licensing of digital products, including e-books, Bibliocommons catalogue interface
- BC Electronic Library Network: Interlibrary loan union catalogue
- BCLA and BCLTA: Knowledge building, advocacy, networking, BC Summer Reading Club
- NNELS: Materials in accessible formats for people with print disabilities

3. INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY GRANTS

In 2019, the Province granted \$11.76M to individual libraries through four grants. Provincial funding for individual libraries is contingent on the use of the funds for the purposes outlined in the grants description and the priorities and expectations letter, as well as the completion of annual reports.

Grant Descriptions

- Operating Grant: All B.C. libraries established under the authority of the *Library Act* receive the Per Capita Operating Grant to support ongoing public library operations and their participation in province-wide initiatives. The operating grants are based on a

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funding formula per capita. The per capita rate benefits libraries serving smaller populations and rural areas the most.

- **Resource Sharing Grant:** The Resource Grant supports libraries in the sharing of materials by alleviating the costs involved in running and managing the interlibrary loan service. The grant is based on a piece rate for materials lent through interlibrary loan services during the previous year.
- **BC OneCard Grant:** The BC OneCard Grant is funding to enable libraries to provide expanded library service to BC residents through participation in the BC OneCard program. The OneCard program ensures that active patrons of any public library in BC may use their card wherever they travel within the province. Grants are based on either a tiered or piece rate (whichever is greater) for materials lent and returned in the previous calendar year. WVML circulated 180,684 items including materials to both InterLINK and BC OneCard library cardholders in 2018, a 47,235 decline since 2014.
- **Library Literacy Grant:** Access to learning and literacy experiences are a core service of B.C. public libraries. These funds support the expansion of library collections, programs, and services that promote literacy and life-long learning. Funds may not be used for building projects or upgrading the library's facilities and furnishings. Literacy funding rates for BC public libraries have been maintained at steady levels since 2009/10, and are not based on a calculation formula.