



*To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries*

October 7, 2016

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

**Regarding 2017 BC Government Budget Priorities**

Dear Committee Members,

This submission is on behalf of the BC Library Trustees Association, which represents over 700 community leaders and local government officials who govern public libraries across British Columbia.

We know that public libraries make a positive difference to how British Columbians connect with, and experience, all the advantages of living in this province. We also know that public libraries significantly contribute to the government's goals for supporting social and economic development, innovation, and student success. Every year we experience increased use across our 247 public libraries that serve over 360 B.C. communities. In 2015, based on statistics gathered by the Libraries Branch, Ministry of Education, public library service across the province included over:

- 60 million visits to library branches, in person and virtual
- 84,000 kids in the Summer Reading Club
- 59 million items circulated
- 8.6 million wifi or public computers accessed in the libraries
- 1.6 million attending programs

These numbers are impressive, as are the stories behind them about communities connecting, learning, and growing. Stories such as newcomers finding welcoming services and support for integration; entrepreneurs accessing research and tools for start-ups; students learning together, whatever their age and background; and families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support childhood and family development.

The BCLTA urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to understand that provincial government financial support is critical to the successful continuance of public libraries and their positive impact on B.C. communities.

As such, we ask that the provincial government include the following priorities in the 2017 provincial budget:

1. Provincial funding for public libraries that, at a minimum, includes annual increases to account for inflation. While libraries appreciate the stability of grant funding that government has provided since 2010 (approximately \$14 million per year), the lack of regular increases means that each year libraries receive less and less support, due to inflationary pressures. After many years of this, libraries are falling behind in their ability to meet growing needs.
2. 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.
3. Government commitment to connectivity is needed. Connectivity is critical in the digital age, yet adequate broadband is always in short supply and/or cost-prohibitive, particularly in rural or remote locations. Most libraries are faced with both rising costs and rising demand.

The BCLTA appreciates the opportunity to participate in this provincial budget process. We trust that you will fully consider the positive impact of libraries across the province and our priorities for the 2017 budget.

Sincerely,



Barbara Kelly

Executive Director, BCLTA

cc: Donna Macdonald, President, BCLTA