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**TO:** CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2019 Jun 24

**FROM:** CHIEF LIBRARIAN

**SUBJECT:** PROVINCIAL FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES

**PURPOSE:** To inform City Council about an advocacy campaign to restore sustainable provincial funding for libraries.

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## RECOMMENDATION

1. **THAT** Council support the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) resolution as put forward by the Town of Sidney regarding sustainable Provincial library funding, as outlined in Section 4.0 of this report.

## REPORT

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Province of British Columbia provides \$14 million in grants to public libraries annually. A resolution, as put forward by the Town of Sidney (Appendix A), will be considered at the 2019 Union of BC Municipalities convention. The resolution requests the Provincial Government increase annual funding for public libraries to \$20 million.

### 2.0 POLICY SECTION

#### Goal

- A Connected Community
  - Digital connection –  
Provide online access to core City services and information
  - Social connection –  
Enhance social connections throughout Burnaby
- An Inclusive Community
  - Serve a diverse community –  
Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community

To: City Manager  
From: Chief Librarian  
Re: Provincial funding for libraries  
2019 Jul 08 ..... Page 2

- A Healthy Community
  - Lifelong learning –  
Improve upon and develop programs and services that enable ongoing learning

### 3.0 BACKGROUND

The Province of British Columbia provides \$14 million in grants to public libraries annually. This grant funding has been static since 2010, and the lack of regular increases means that each year libraries receive less and less Provincial funding, due to inflationary pressures. Funding is provided to individual libraries; in 2018, BPL received a grant of \$476,627, which represents 3.4% of total revenue.

The Burnaby Public Library Board has made a written submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services urging the Provincial Government to increase grant funding from \$14 million to \$20 million annually (Appendix B).

### 4.0 RECOMMENDATION

That Council support the following UBCM resolution, put forward by the Town of Sidney, entitled **“Restoring Sustainable Provincial Library Funding Levels”** to restore sustainable Provincial funding for libraries:

WHEREAS libraries in British Columbia are largely financed by levies paid by local governments, and where Provincial library funding has remained virtually stagnant for the past 30 years,

AND WHEREAS libraries in British Columbia provide open and equal public access to vital resources, including the internet, public computers, digital library tools and in-person service from expert staff to provide opportunities for all British Columbians to access knowledge and information and increase literacy in our communities and present informative programmes: including First Nations programmes and materials which advance public understanding and reconciliation,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM strongly encourage the Government of British Columbia to give urgent attention to funding for BC public libraries by adding \$20 million to the BC Provincial Budget for 2020 for allocation to public libraries throughout BC,

AND FURTHER THAT the Province be requested to ensure that BC libraries will henceforth receive Provincial Government financial support at a sustainable level in subsequent years following the 2020 Budget.

To: City Manager  
From: Chief Librarian  
Re: Provincial funding for libraries  
2019 Jul 08 ..... Page 3

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Beth Davies', with a stylized, cursive script.

Beth Davies  
CHIEF LIBRARIAN

bd

cc Burnaby Public Library Board



## APPENDIX A

# TOWN OF SIDNEY

2440 Sidney Avenue, Sidney, British Columbia V8L 1Y7

Phone: 250-656-1184 Fax: 250-655-4508

Email: [admin@sidney.ca](mailto:admin@sidney.ca) Website: [www.sidney.ca](http://www.sidney.ca)

June 12, 2019

VIA EMAIL: [jjustason@ubcm.ca](mailto:jjustason@ubcm.ca)

Jamee Justason  
Information & Resolutions Coordinator  
Union of British Columbia Municipalities  
60 - 10551 Shellbridge Way  
Richmond, BC V6X 2W9

Dear Jamee Justason:

**Subject: Restoring Sustainable Provincial Library Funding Levels**

Sidney Town Council, at a meeting held on June 10, 2019, considered a recommendation from the Vancouver Island Regional Library Board regarding provincial library funding and requesting a resolution be presented to UBCM for consideration.

Public libraries provide important services to the citizens in our community and Council encourages the Province to ensure they continue to receive sustainable funding. Enclosed is a resolution to be presented to UBCM.

Best Regards,



Sandi Nelson  
Corporate Officer

Encl.

Resolution to UBCM:

**RESTORING SUSTAINABLE PROVINCIAL LIBRARY FUNDING LEVELS**

WHEREAS libraries in British Columbia are largely financed by levies paid by local governments, and where Provincial library funding has remained virtually stagnant for the past 30 years,

AND WHEREAS libraries in British Columbia provide open and equal public access to vital resources, including the internet, public computers, digital library tools and in-person service from expert staff to provide opportunities for all British Columbians to access knowledge and information and increase literacy in our communities and present informative programmes: including First Nations programmes and material which advance public understanding and reconciliation,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM strongly encourage the Government of British Columbia to give urgent attention to funding for BC public libraries by adding \$20 million to the BC Provincial Budget for 2020 for allocation to public libraries throughout BC,

AND FURTHER THAT the Province be requested to ensure that BC Libraries will henceforth receive Provincial Government financial support at a sustainable level in subsequent years following the 2020 Budget.

June 24, 2019

Attention: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
Regarding 2020 BC Government Budget Priorities  
Submission on behalf of the Burnaby Public Library

Dear Committee Members,

It is urgent that we bring to your immediate attention the importance of provincial support for public libraries.

Public libraries provide services for all community members so that they may participate in, and benefit from the social and economic development of their communities. We know that 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.

This committee is aware of the important role of public libraries from the annual UBCM resolutions regarding provincial public library funding and from the compelling stories and evidence annually submitted to this committee from public library trustees, staff, community members, and local government officials from across the province. We appreciate the provincial government's recognition of the public library funding issue. In 2017 the provincial government, in response to the 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:

- 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. At Burnaby Public Library, we answered more than 223,000 questions in 2018, and 62,000 people attended 1,762 programs. BPL also provides free online technology courses that help people get the skills they need to find work.
- Welcoming spaces and services for all residents. In 2018, 1.8 million people visited libraries in Burnaby, and community groups and individuals made use of our free meeting rooms more than 4,000 times. Our staff hear daily about the impact our services have, on a newcomer whose first port of call on arriving in Burnaby is the local library, on a gay teenager whose relationship with library staff gives him the confidence to ask for resources and help for the first time, and on a homeless person whose use of social media on library computers keeps him connected to his family.

- Families thriving through the joy of reading and attending programs that support early literacy and community connection. Burnaby Public Library users checked out more than 3 million items in 2018, enabling families and individuals of all income levels to access books, DVDs, magazines and online resources that they would not otherwise be able to afford.
- Reconciliation initiatives that open dialogue and advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. In April 2019, 95 Burnaby Library staff and trustees participated in four experiential workshops to increase our understanding of the history and current realities of Indigenous communities and people. Each June, we partner with local organizations to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Burnaby Public Library urges the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to act on our shared understanding that provincial government financial support is critical to the successful continuance of public libraries and their positive impact on BC communities.

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. Since 2009 the public library community has asked that the provincial government provide funding for public libraries 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.

This year we are asking the provincial government for \$20 million for public libraries in 2020 as this will help address the chronic under-funding, lack of increases for inflation, and past government cuts.

Your attention to this urgent issue is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Lorraine Shore, Board Chair



Beth Davies, Chief Librarian

cc: Minister Fleming, Ministry of Education  
MLA Katrina Chen  
MLA Raj Chouhan  
MLA Anne Kang  
MLA Janet Routledge

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

Burnaby Public Library Administration - 6100 Willingdon Ave, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, V5H 4N5  
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