



ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTORS



British Columbia
Library Association



BCLibraries
COOPERATIVE



British Columbia
Library Trustees
Association

March 24, 2022

The Honourable Nathan Cullen, MLA
Minister of Municipal Affairs
Via email

Re: BC Public Libraries

Dear Minister Cullen,

On behalf of the BC Public Library Partners (BCPLP), congratulations on your appointment as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and thank you for inviting us to meet with you next week. We look forward to working with you to strengthen communities across the province and ensure that all British Columbians thrive.

Libraries are critical to creating robust, resilient communities. They are community hubs, promoting belonging and equity for those they serve. They support traditional and technological literacy, ensuring that British Columbians have the skills to participate and succeed in the economy. They provide well-trained and compassionate staff, offering connections to essential social and government services.

During Covid, public libraries provided essential services to their communities. Teaching seniors how to connect with family using Zoom; providing ebooks to kids when schools were closed; helping people make vaccination appointments and printing out vaccine passports; providing jobseekers with computers to look for employment and access services - throughout the pandemic, libraries made a difference in the lives of British Columbians. As a result, we are busier than ever.

While the cost of providing services has dramatically increased over the past decade, provincial funding for libraries has stayed flat. In 2009, provincial funding for libraries was cut by ~25%, from \$17.9M to \$13.7M. Since that time, annual provincial funding has remained stagnant. As a result, some libraries are having to make difficult decisions about what services to maintain and which to cut. With the current dramatic rise in inflation, financial pressures are only increasing.

The 71 public library systems in BC are essential contributors to this government's commitment to make people's lives better, safer, and more affordable. Restored provincial funding will increase the capacity of BC public libraries to provide all British Columbians with the services that make a positive difference in their lives.

We're looking forward to meeting with you and discussing the challenges at play across the public library sector.

Sincerely,

Rina Hadziev & Kevin Millsip
Co-chairs, the BC Public Library Partners

CC:

Tara Faganello, Assistant Deputy Minister, Local Government Division
Marijke Edmondson, Strategic Advisor, Local Government Division
Mari Martin, Director, Public Libraries Branch