



Office of the Chair

October 17, 2022

Mayor Elect Ken Sim
City of Vancouver
453 W. 12th Ave,
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Elect Sim,

On behalf of the Board of the Vancouver Public Library (VPL), congratulations on your election as Mayor of Vancouver. It was a pleasure to speak with you at the recent DVBLA Mayor's Forum about VPL's critical role in helping to address many of the issues facing Vancouver residents, such as affordability, public safety, and economic recovery.

As we address these challenges, public libraries are needed more than ever.

The Board and staff of VPL are continuing to support lifelong learning, reduce social isolation, bridge the digital divide, and help rebuild from the impacts of COVID-19.

Across VPL's 21 locations, we provide free, accessible work spaces for hundreds of new immigrants, remote workers and students every day. Through our programs, displays and collections, VPL is combatting racism and misinformation, and fostering understanding. Our staff are on the front line, dealing with the impacts of homelessness and mental health challenges, and we need support to bolster their resilience.

When we spoke, you suggested we share the top issues and opportunities facing the Library. The single biggest issue facing VPL is the need for funding to keep pace with rising costs. For example, VPL has continually added programs and services to respond to our community over the past 10 years without any substantial funding increases to our budget. We have done our best by reallocating existing staffing; however, it is no longer possible to do more within our existing budget to meet growing needs.

We see how important our indoor public spaces are in Vancouver, for families, new immigrants, for everyone living in smaller spaces, and for those without homes of their own, yet half of our branches are not open on Mondays or full days on Sundays. Central Library alone sees almost 4,000 visitors a day – busier than an average shopping mall!

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As the incoming Council discusses the City's next budget, it is important for you and Councillors to know that the VPL Board is concerned of possible budget reductions and resulting negative impacts on our community. Budget reductions will result in reduced hours and branch closures, at a time when the need for VPL's spaces is critical, and our downtown locations are experiencing the same issues and tensions that every other business and service shares.

I would welcome a meeting with you, alongside Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian and CEO of VPL, to discuss in more detail some of the ways that VPL is supporting our community and how our work aligns with your priorities. We would also be pleased to provide you with a tour of the Central Library or any of our 21 locations, and to share more with you about our programs and services.

Congratulations again on your election and we look forward to working with you in your new role.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Lowe (he/him)
Chair, VPL Board

Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.