

From: ["Levitt, Karen" <karen.levitt@vancouver.ca>](mailto:karen.levitt@vancouver.ca)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council"](#)

Date: 9/8/2025 10:55:21 AM

Subject: Memo to Mayor and Council - VPL Board Increasing Funding for Vital Community Libraries - September 8 2025

Attachments: VPL - Library Board - Memo - RTS 18023 Council Motion Increasing Funding for Vital Community Libraries - 2025-09-05_.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached is a memo from the Chair of the Vancouver Library Board which provides Mayor and Council with information in response to the May 21st Council motion (RTS 10823) on increasing funding for vital community libraries. The motion included a request for VPL to report back by Q3 with an estimated cost to open all Vancouver libraries on Mondays, based on the current collective agreement provisions and service delivery standards.

Should you have any questions regarding the above, please feel free to contact Ben Hyman, Chief Librarian and CEO at Ben.hyman@vpl.ca or 604-331-4007

Thanks,

Karen

Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
karen.levitt@vancouver.ca

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x m k y m/Musqueam, S wx\u817_w\u7mesh/Squamish and s lilw ta /Tsleil-Waututh nations

MEMORANDUM

September 5, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Ben Hyman, Chief Librarian & CEO

FROM: Karen Spears, Chair, VPL Board

SUBJECT: RTS 18023: Increasing Funding for Vital Community Libraries

In response to Council's motion of May 21, 2025, VPL staff have identified that the cost to open all ten library branches that are currently closed on Mondays would be \$1.65M.

Since 2023, VPL has adjusted branch open hours to meet high public demand for library services within its existing budget, applying incremental funds to stabilize operations. Post pandemic, the Library faces two major challenges: it is now not only *more expensive* to operate but also *more difficult to fill shifts*. Primarily due to negotiated wage increases and fixed expenses, operating costs have increased at a greater rate than budgets have grown, and a number of labour conditions have compounded the challenges:

- The current Collective Agreement limits VPL's ability to regularly schedule full time staff on Sundays, increasing reliance on part time and auxiliary staff.
- Changes to sick time legislation mean that part time and auxiliary staff are now eligible for paid sick leave, and changing norms around working while sick mean more staff are now taking sick leave.
- The high cost of living in Vancouver makes it more difficult to recruit and retain part time staff as they often work multiple jobs and are not always available.

Operating at minimum staffing levels to maximize open hours has led to unplanned closures when staff are not available or call in sick.

While VPL appreciates the support demonstrated through the motion to increase the number of branches open on Mondays, the VPL Board has identified open hours on Sundays, which are substantially busier per hour than Mondays, and ensuring reliable service to the public through adequate staffing levels, as their priority.

The VPL Board has had initial discussions about Council's request to develop 2026 budget scenarios based on zero, 1.5% or 2.5% property tax increases, and the limited number of options available to VPL. The Library operates with a very lean budget; the ratio of management to unionized staff is 1: 30, compared to 1: 15 for the City. Over 75% of the budget is staff costs, which directly translate to opening hours. As such, the consequence of expense reductions would be the closure of branches and further reduction of hours.

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As Council reviews the holistic 2026 budget and implications, the VPL Board will continue to work with staff to find ways to deliver on the Board's priorities within the funding envelope provided while seeking to minimize impacts on public service.

On behalf of the VPL Board, I want to express my appreciation for Council's commitment to, and support for, continued delivery of critical library services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Spears". The signature is written in a cursive style. To the right of the signature, there is a small, faint yellow rectangular mark.

Karen Spears, Chair
Vancouver Public Library Board
Board@vpl.ca