

April 4, 2017

Dear Members of SARM,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA). SLA's mission is to be the voice of and support to Saskatchewan's library communities. My letter is in regards to the \$3.5 million loss of provincial government funding to seven of Saskatchewan's regional library systems. (source: <http://finance.gov.sk.ca/budget17-18/BG-Education2017-18.pdf>) Cutting 58% of regional library system budgets represents a miniscule percentage of the province's total operating budget.

SLA is asking for the support of SARM Members to advocate that the Government of Saskatchewan undertake the following:

- reconsider its budget cuts to regional public libraries
- schedule consultations immediately with regional public library directors and key stakeholders in communities to strategize options for future planning

Part of SLA's advocacy work is encouraging citizens of Saskatchewan to contact their local MLA to raise awareness about how libraries have played a positive role in their life. SLA has a letter writing toolkit at <http://saskla.ca/responding-to-the-cuts-to-public-library-budgets> that residents of your communities are invited to use.

SLA's statement on March 23 emphasizes that all residents of Saskatchewan must continue to have equal access to a variety of public library programs and resources. (source: <http://saskla.ca/saskatchewan-library-association-voices-concern-about-funding-cuts-to-libraries>) Saskatchewan was a pioneer in Canada for developing a cost effective province-wide library system and it has operated successfully for many years. (source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v10i2.3547>) However, the Saskatchewan Government's funding cuts to public libraries jeopardizes this model system.

Funding cuts to public libraries are already making an impact. Effective April 4, 2017 electronic borders between Saskatchewan public libraries are closing. (source: <http://www.reginalibrary.ca/blogs/media/blogs/press/BordersclosedbetweenSKlibrarysystems.pdf>) The availability, through Interlibrary loan, of books, DVD, audio books, magazines, online resources, and video games to all citizens has ceased. Purchasing new materials will be drastically reduced or cease altogether. Palliser Regional Library system has announced staff layoffs. Libraries will experience severely reduced hours and some will be forced to close

Libraries offer quality programs such as cultural diversification programming, ESL services for newcomers, job advancement services such as writing resume classes, tutoring and homework help, early childhood literacy, and emergency awareness programs. Libraries are also friendship centres,



house local history, and display art by local talents. Libraries offer internet access to those who can't afford it and printing services for those in need.

Libraries have a wealth of life-long learning opportunities for people of all ages. Scholarly research has proven that children who have compromised access to quality reading material will experience difficulties later in life. In addition, not having access to a wealth of reliable online resources for people to conduct research and leisure activities from the comfort of their home or in a library will negatively impact the wellbeing of communities. Libraries offer incredible efficiencies and value for communities that arguably no other public space can offer. Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



J. Michael Shires

President, Saskatchewan Library Association

