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Office of the Premier
226 Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan
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Dear Premier Brad Wall:

The Saskatchewan Association of Library Technicians (SALT) is worried by the recent funding to cuts to Saskatchewan libraries tabled in the Saskatchewan Provincial Budget last week: \$4.8 million cut to our Provincial Library systems (Deibert, 2017). We are also concerned about the 5% reduction in operational funding for post-secondary institutions in the Province (Deibert, 2017). We share the sentiments of our sister library organizations and residents of Saskatchewan who are very concerned about the implications of these cuts. Our organization represents a vast amount of library employees throughout the province, with members in every sector of library work. There is no doubt that these cuts will impact services in public, school, post-secondary, health, and special libraries throughout Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan's libraries foster life-long literacy, research, and technology skills - supporting people from every walk of life. Whether it is a young family using the library to take out books and participate in programming, a senior learning how to navigate the internet, to job-seekers using resources to find and apply for jobs when they might not have internet access at home, to students using the library to study and find resources, to residents who love to read and learn, but cannot afford their own e-books, DVDs, magazines, etc. – libraries are the heart of a community, and our communities are better because of them.

Library professionals across the province were disheartened by Education Minister Don Morgan's comments following the budget announcement: "We think as a province we should be getting out of bricks and mortar libraries and people should be focusing on electronic or alternate media" (Dao, 2017). Public libraries supply Saskatchewan residents with access to e-books, databases, streaming video and music, and other electronic resources – a very cost friendly alternative to personally purchasing these items. On that note, many residents do not own their own electronic devices to support e-books and electronic resources. Some residents do not have internet access and rely on the library as a place to take out print books and resources as an

alternative. Libraries are on trend with emerging technologies and continue to supply Saskatchewan peoples with recent trends in technology so our people can stay current in an ever-changing world.

A snapshot of services that are provided to rural libraries proves that our libraries are well used: “Last year, we circulated almost 300,000 items, which was an increase of 2,000 items per month.... We issued 1,200 new library cards and had 664 children read 8,000 books through the summer reading club. Last year, the Internet was accessed from our public libraries more than 22,000 times”- Dr. Jean McKendry, Director of the Chinook Regional Library (Baird, 2017).

Education Minister Don Morgan made equally concerning comments regarding library spaces, stating that “a library may not be a place that should be used as a sanctuary” (Dao, 2017). With all due respect, this comment was coming from a place of ignorance and we strongly encourage Don Morgan to enter a library and observe the quality and quantity of services offered to Saskatchewan residents.

SALT urges the Provincial Government to reconsider these cuts and to find an alternative funding model to keep our libraries open. We encourage the government to collaborate with the Regional Library Systems and the Saskatoon and Regina Public libraries.

On behalf of the executive and membership of the Saskatchewan Association of Library Technicians, I urge the government of Saskatchewan to revisit their decision to make these funding cuts and to reach out to their provincial libraries, library professionals, library supporters, and library organizations to attain a better grasp of the impact of these cuts on the people of our province. Our organization would be happy to speak with you about this.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Haskell
Vice President, SALT
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cc: Hon. Don Morgan, Q.C., Deputy Premier, Minister of Education

References:

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Deibert, Dave. (2017). Saskatchewan 2017-18 budget: By the numbers. Retrieved from: <http://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/saskatchewan-2017-18-budget-by-the-numbers>