

## **Saskatchewan Library Association voices concern about funding cuts to libraries**

March 23, 2017

The Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA) is very concerned about targeted reductions in funding to libraries in the tabled 2017-2018 provincial budget and the implications to the residents and communities of the province.

The Ministry of Education reported that operating grant funding of \$1.3 million for municipal library systems in Regina and Saskatoon will be eliminated. Seven of eight regional library systems will have a reduction of \$3.5 million (58%) to \$2.5 million in operating funding. Fortunately, funding for the Paskisimom Nuyeháh Library System (PNLS) in Saskatchewan's North will remain unchanged at \$974,000. (Source: Ministry of Education Budget Backgrounder <http://finance.gov.sk.ca/budget17-18/BG-Education2017-18.pdf>) However, total cuts to municipal and regional library systems will be \$4.8 million.

SLA is also concerned with a 5% reduction in provincial operating grants to universities, technical institutes and regional colleges. (Source: Saskatchewan Provincial Budget 17-18 <http://www.finance.gov.sk.ca/budget17-18/2017-18Budget.pdf>) This action will potentially affect the operations of post-secondary libraries.

Michael Shires, President of SLA, stated, "Libraries play a critical role in life-long learning and enhancing the quality of life for citizens of all ages. Libraries matter because they are fundamental to the cultural, educational, recreational, economic, and political well-being of communities and the people of Saskatchewan."

Libraries in Saskatchewan have been successful collaborators with many community and cultural organizations for decades. All residents of Saskatchewan must continue to have equal access to a variety of public library programs and resources.

Libraries are also much more than just bricks and mortar buildings. Online services (electronic journals, books, streaming music and video) can only be made available by having a physical building with trained staff.

Libraries offer a safe space and are often the only place where the general public and students can get a reliable Internet connection. Libraries are a key component in supporting needs of communities and these targeted cuts will be detrimental to all citizens of Saskatchewan.

"SLA will continue to gather information from the regional and municipal libraries on the full impact of this funding reduction and the implications for their patrons. It can be surmised that there is no way that cuts of this magnitude can be absorbed without it affecting library service to our communities," Shires said.

Additional responses to the budget reductions for regional and municipal libraries and the impact across the province will continue to be compiled and relayed. SLA will continue to advocate for adequate library funding and to support library workers. SLA calls on the provincial government to find alternative solutions for keeping libraries sustainably funded.

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