

Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association
Disappointed by Library Budget Cuts
March 24, 2017

Saskatchewan's public libraries collectively support the literacy and lifelong learning needs of 1.1 million Saskatchewan residents. Now, more than ever, libraries play a critical role in the social, educational, cultural and economic success of Saskatchewan communities. Our libraries are an essential investment in the future of our communities and are essential drivers of success in school preparedness, reading readiness, economic and employment success, and social equity. Our public libraries are a vital link for every resident and every community ensuring success of all people of Saskatchewan, regardless of location or background.

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association is both shocked and troubled by the drastic cuts to library funding in Wednesday's Provincial budget. We are very concerned about the negative implications to residents in Saskatchewan communities.

The Province has eliminated the operating grant to the municipal library systems in Regina and Saskatoon – a loss of \$1.3 million. The seven regional library systems have received an almost 60% reduction in operating funding. This is a reduction of \$3.5 million. Funding to PNLs, in northern Saskatchewan, remains the same at \$974,000.

“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,” said Education Minister Don Morgan following the budget announcement. Minister Morgan said the Province no longer wants to be in the library business and they're looking to electronic media and interlibrary sharing. As an organization whose very job it is to advocate for libraries in the Province we are deeply disappointed and discouraged that the work we have done promoting the value of Saskatchewan's libraries has fallen on deaf ears. Had the government been listening they would know that libraries are indeed working with promoting and developing technologies. Libraries are the wave of the future.

It was a huge disappointment that libraries were not forewarned or consulted with given the severity of the budget cuts. SLTA strongly urges the Provincial Government to find alternative solutions for keeping libraries adequately funded. We feel immediate collaboration is required.

SLTA will continue its work to advocate for necessary library funding and to support library workers. On behalf of the SLTA and libraries across the Province please contact your MLA and let them know why you value your local library. Ask them to restore funding so our libraries can continue to make their vital services and programming available to all residents of Saskatchewan. Information including phone numbers and email addresses is available online: <http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/mlas/current-mlas-print-version>.

For more information, please contact Executive Director Nancy Kennedy at njk@sasktel.net.

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