

January 29, 2025

The Honourable Dave Ritcey
Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick St., 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 456, STN Central
Halifax, NS B3J 2R5

Via email: MIN_CCTH@novascotia.ca

Dear Minister Ritcey,

Congratulations on your election win and on your important appointment to the Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage portfolio.

We are writing to you on behalf of our respective councils to request your department's finalization and implementation of a fair and equitable funding formula to support our library system.

On December 11, 2024, elected representatives of all member units of the Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL) (the units from West Hants, Kings and Annapolis counties), met and received an impactful presentation on the state of the vital services provided by AVRL.

As a collective, we were duly impressed by the:

- significant growth in usage over the last three years
- amount and diversity in services being offered
- efficiency improvements being garnered through the creation of the Same Page provincial consortium of libraries and increased access to digital collections; and
- the large number of age groups and newcomers being served

We also heard tangible examples of how the AVRL branches are front and center in our communities, offering services such as rapid testing kits for COVID virus detection, and serving as a referral agency for vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, as a collective we also heard and are dismayed by the:

- high turnover of staff and the present disparity between the current remuneration levels and a living wage
- unsustainable occurrences of deficit budgeting; and
- the resulting impact that these and other negative factors are having on the volume and reliability of services being offered by AVRL

Mr. Minister, we know you will agree that our province and region is presently in a state of unprecedented transition. We also believe, Mr. Minister that you will agree that many of these impacts couldn't have been planned for, but that our library system is integral in addressing the challenges and benefits our communities are facing.

Many of our municipalities are stepping up with significant capital improvements with respect to physical libraries. Creating modern and accessible libraries and community spaces has been and will continue to be a growing priority.

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We believe that a refreshed funding formula to support a vibrant library system is an important part of the government's plan to grow the population of our province. We would be most appreciative if you would action the vital work your government has been undertaking in modernizing the financial relationship.

Respectfully,

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- c. The Honourable Tim Houston, Premier
Christopher Shore, Deputy Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
Stephanie Smith, Executive Director, Archives, Libraries and Museums, Dept of
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