

CORL – Council of Regional Librarians

February 13, 2026

Honourable Dave Ritcey
Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick Street, 3rd Floor
PO Box 456, Station Central, Halifax, NS B3J 2R5

Dear Minister Ritcey,

Please accept this letter on behalf of all nine Nova Scotia regional libraries.

Across the province, public libraries are strained. Community needs continue to grow, and the public is relying heavily on their local libraries. We recognize the difficult fiscal environment the province is navigating, and we believe we represent a proven, cost-effective solution that reduces future costs and improves government efficiency.

A modest investment in libraries delivers wide-reaching returns for Nova Scotians and for government:

- **Public libraries meet people where they are.** We reach residents that other services often struggle to reach, including seniors, newcomers, low-income families, people with disabilities, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those living in rural, isolated communities. This saves time, money, and pressure across departments.
- **We offer significant impact relative to cost.** Nova Scotians benefit from access to 89 library branches, open more than 144,500 hours a year, with a collection of over 1.7 million items, and staffed by trained, knowledgeable professionals – all for 0.091% of total provincial government spending in 2025-26.
- **Constituents rely on libraries for far more than books.** We are trusted community hubs where people find connection, guidance, and practical support. Modest additional investments in library services would advance provincial goals in literacy, health, education, economic participation, emergency preparedness, healthy aging, and social well-being.
- **Libraries help the government succeed.** We translate policy priorities into real-world outcomes by supporting digital access, health navigation, workforce readiness, and safe, inclusive public spaces. Libraries are where government initiatives meet people's everyday lives.

Without a sustainable funding solution, libraries will increasingly be forced to say no. Library boards across the province have stretched resources to their limits. One-time funding has delayed, but not resolved, the underlying problem. *Without additional investment, many libraries face service reductions, decreased collection spending, staff layoffs, and even branch closures in 2026.*

In difficult economic times, Nova Scotians turn to public libraries more, not less. Demand continues to grow:

- Since 2010, in-person visits have increased 31% to 3.5 million visits in 2024
- Program attendance has risen 41%, from 196,719 in 2010 to 332,355 in 2024
- Nova Scotians borrowed more than 8 million library items in 2025, a number that continues to rise annually
- Rural Nova Scotians borrow more than 24,000 items every month through the Same Page network of eight regional libraries—an increase of approximately 7x over pre-Same Page figures—improving rural access and equity, while creating added staff and shipping cost pressures
- The average cost of a book has risen from \$16.08, nearly doubling to \$29.78 in 2024
- Since 2020, inflation has increased 21%, with no increase to core library funding, significantly reducing purchasing power
- Library funding represented 0.13% of total government spending in 2020, dropping to 0.091% in 2025.

We urge the province to revisit the recommendations of the 2024 Library Funding Review Committee, which presented clear, costed options for sustainable, equitable, and strategic investment in the public library service Nova Scotians need to thrive.

A modest increase in library funding would directly address issues MLAs hear about daily: affordability, loneliness, access to healthcare, housing insecurity, food literacy, newcomer integration, and community resilience. Public libraries are among the most efficient public services in the province, with deep community roots and a strong record of accountability.

With stable, equitable funding, libraries can continue to say yes to Nova Scotians and to the government priorities we help advance every day.

Respectfully,



Ashley Nunn-Smith, Chair
Council of Regional Librarians

CC: Premier Tim Houston
Kelliann Dean, Executive Deputy Minister, Finance and Treasury Board
Christopher Shore, Deputy Minister, CCTH
Sara Halliday, Associate Deputy Minister, CCTH
Stephanie Smith, Executive Director, Libraries & Museums
Lynn Somers, Director, NSPL
Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities