



Western Counties Regional Library

January 23, 2024

Municipality of Argyle
5 J. E. Hatfield Court
PO Box 10, Tusket, Nova Scotia
B0W3M0

Dear Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Western Counties Regional Library Board to express our concerns about the sustainability of libraries and to request an additional 5% in municipal assistance to help maintain regional library services for the upcoming fiscal year.

Decades of inadequate funding and increased pressures has meant that employee wages remain low while community demand continues to rise. Libraries received a moderate funding increase in 2020 and our funding has since remained frozen as per the current funding formula, which will expire March 2025.

This year, our Board made the difficult decision to approve a deficit budget to fund wage increases. This brought the hourly wage for the majority of our frontline staff to \$18.75, which is still well below a living wage. With planned annual cost of living increases and our responsibility to compensate our employees fairly and equitably, we anticipate needing to withdraw \$60,000 from our reserve funds in 2024-2025 to support this increase. We have trimmed the fat in every area from library hours to management positions and there is nowhere else to cut without having it felt throughout the region.

We have advised Minister MacMaster of the Department of Communities Culture, Tourism and Heritage of our current financial situation and the potential for service reductions. Along with all other regional libraries, we have requested a 5% increase in provincial government assistance for 2024-2025 and have asked Minister MacMaster to initiate the Library Funding Formula review process as quickly as possible.

Thank you in advance for considering our ask for a 5% increase in assistance of \$3,200 for 2024-2025. We welcome an opportunity to speak to you and your council about this request and about regional library services. You may contact our Executive Director, Erin Comeau, at director@westerncounties.ca or 902-742-2486 ext. 255 if you are interested in a meeting.

We hope that by working closely with municipal and provincial partners on a funding formula review that we will find ourselves in a more favourable position a year from now.

Yours sincerely,



Sherry Thorburn Irvine
Board Chair, WCRL
Cc Ben Cleveland
Enclosures

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