

Hon. Dale Kirby,

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development,

Re: Announcement to Close 54 Public Library Branches in Newfoundland and Labrador

Wednesday May 4, 2016.

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians/l'Association canadienne des bibliothécaires académiques professionnels (CAPAL/ACBAP) we are writing to express our deep concern over the recently announced plan to close 54 public library branches in Newfoundland and Labrador, representing over 50% of public libraries.

We are deeply concerned about the impact on literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador, which has the worst literacy rate of any province in Canada. The justification that 85% of residents will still be within a 30 minute drive of a library is illogical and troubling, and serves only to underline that the closure will have a disproportionate impact on those who are disadvantaged. Public libraries serve a broad range of functions, from programming for children and seniors to internet access, which cannot be replaced by providing increased access to e-books and books by mail. Public libraries play an important function in difficult economic times, providing free and equal access to information for all. Public libraries are an investment in the human intellectual capital of a province and foundational to student success in post-secondary studies.

Finally, the 10% tax on books, also introduced by your government, is equally concerning and counterproductive. It makes Newfoundland and Labrador the only province in the country to tax books which, again, will have a negative impact on literacy rates.

We urge the government to reconsider these drastic measures which will, without a doubt, have an adverse impact on Newfoundland and Labrador communities for years to come.

Sincerely,

Mary Kandiuk

On behalf of the Board, Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians/l'Association canadienne des bibliothécaires académiques professionnels (CAPAL/ACBAP)