



To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries

May 2, 2016

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

via email: dalekirby@gov.nl.ca

Dear Minister Kirby,

I am writing on behalf of the BC Library Trustees Association, which represents 700 community volunteers and local government officials who govern public libraries across BC. We were saddened to hear of your government's decision to close 54 library branches, and would encourage you to give this further consideration.

The difficult economic situation faced by your Province is prompting this decision (and many others) and we appreciate the complexity of the decisions you must make. However, research from the U.S. showed that during the 2008 financial crisis, use of libraries increased substantially. So your decision to close libraries at this time may be ill-advised.

Libraries are evolving. They are no longer book repositories, with their key function being the provision of reading material. That remains an important role, of course, but increasingly libraries are being considered vital community hubs and partners.

Libraries are where lonely seniors go to read a newspaper or learn how to use their iPad, where a woman looking for a job goes to learn about ways to do that, where teen-agers go when they need a safe place, and where toddlers learn about the excitement of reading, preparing for a literate future.

Free services such as these simply do not exist elsewhere, and I'm sure your libraries, like ours, work hard to respond to individual and community needs, helping to prepare people for changing times and new opportunities.

Easy and free access to libraries is critical for individuals, communities and provinces if they are to be resilient and prosperous. We urge you to reflect on the value of libraries, weighed against the relatively small investment required to support them, and hopefully find a way to reverse your decision on library closures.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donna Macdonald".

Donna Macdonald
President, BC Library Trustees Association