

Annapolis Valley Regional Library

P.O. Box 510 236 Commercial Street Berwick, NS B0P 1E0

Phone 1-866-922-0229

www.valleylibrary.ca email: administration@valleylibrary.ca

The Honourable Allan MacMaster
Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick St., 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 456, STN Central
Halifax, NS B3J 2R5
Sent via email: MIN_CCTH@novascotia.ca

March 28, 2024

Dear Minister MacMaster,

Thank you for your letter of January 15, 2024. We are writing to answer the questions that you had outlined in that letter, and would be happy to provide additional information.

In 2023-24, AVRL received Bridge Funding of \$58,500, which was extremely helpful. This grant was used to help fund a balanced budget that included:

1. 2% cost-of-living adjustment for salaries
2. Increases to liability insurance and extended health care benefits
3. Same Page software and shipping costs

However, the 2023-24 budget soon proved to be unequal to the major challenges associated with staff recruitment and retention. Our areas of challenge are:

1. Turnover: 38% of permanent staff positions have turned over from 2022-2024, which has resulted in significant lack of capacity
2. Low wages: have resulted in a lack of candidates and poor retention
3. Casual staff: usage has increased exponentially to augment the lean staffing model

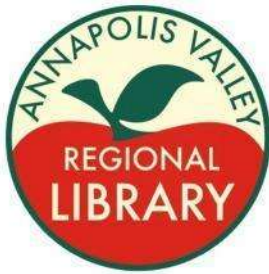
Further, AVRL staff have unionized and the first collective agreement was ratified in October 2023. To retain a competent workforce and avoid service disruption through strike or other labour action, the AVRL Board was willing to use its financial reserves, and has authorized deficit budgets for those years.

As a result of staffing shortages, and to reduce the deficit, in 2023-24 we have cut:

1. Programs: 50% reduction; only core literacy and technology programs continuing.
2. Staff: positions are being gapped where possible, especially management/non-union.
3. Special projects: with fewer staff we cannot advance the library's role in community.

The budget for collections was reduced in 2021 to be able to participate in the Same Page consortium, so these funds have not been further reduced.

Due to these changes, the previously forecasted deficit of over \$100,000 for 2023-24 is now estimated to be close to zero.



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In 2024-25, these reductions will continue. Based on the current funding formula, we anticipate that the 2024-25 Bridge Funding amount for AVRL will be roughly \$90,000. We are very appreciative of this assistance and we thank you for your efforts to secure this additional funding. The budget shortfall for 2024-25 including Bridge funding and service/staff reductions is currently estimated at \$150,000 (previous estimate \$250,000).

Taken together, these measures will allow us to maintain regular operating hours through 2024-25. Forecasting beyond that point is not possible as the collective agreement expires on March 31, 2025.

For these reasons, AVRL is eager to begin the funding review process with the Ministry and CORL. AVRL's CEO, Julia Merritt, is deeply involved in working with Council of Regional Librarians subcommittee to research salary rates. She will also be participating on the Funding Review Committee. Lastly, the Library Development Fund's grant to AVRL this year will permit a community consultation project in late 2024, which will provide updated information regarding community needs as well as satisfaction levels. We look forward to being able to contribute time and data to the ongoing efforts to plan for the future success of Nova Scotia's public libraries.

Again, we thank the Ministry for its ongoing support of public libraries in Nova Scotia and we look forward to working together during the budget review process.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet Ness".

Janet Ness, Board Chair

CC: Mr. Keith Irving, MLA for Kings South

Mr. Carmen Kerr, MLA for Annapolis

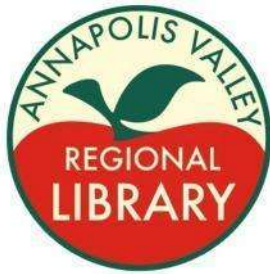
Mr. John Lohr, MLA for Kings North

Mr. Chris Palmer, MLA for Kings West

Ms. Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA for Hants West

Stephanie Smith, Executive Director, Archives, Libraries and Museums, Dept of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

Lynn Somers, Director, Nova Scotia Provincial Library, Dept of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage



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Background Figures

2022-23		Notes
# of positions vacated	12	Not including casual staff
% of total workforce turnover	25%	
% of staff making \$16-18/hr	9%	Living wage for Ann. Valley 2022-23 is \$22.40
% of staff making \$18-20/hr	44%	73% of total staff make below a living wage
% of staff making \$20-22/hr	20%	

2023-24		Notes
# of positions vacated	6	Not including casual staff
% of total workforce turnover	13%	
Increase in use of Casual staff	700%	Compared to 2022-23
Salary increase	\$1/hour	Negotiated with NSUPE; living wage \$25.40
Forecasted Deficit	\$100,000	March 2024: now estimating near \$0 deficit

2024-25		Notes
Salary increase	\$1/hour	Negotiated with NSUPE
Forecasted Deficit	\$150,000	Reduced from original estimate of \$250,000