



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information X	Recommendation ☐	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
----------------------	---	---	--

To: Committee of the Whole
Submitted by: Chrystal Remme, Councillor District 3
Date: July 9, 2026
Subject: Annapolis Valley Regional Library Board – Information Update

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Not Applicable – Information Report.

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

Not Applicable – Information Report.

BACKGROUND

Property	Public Opinion X	Environment	Social X	Economic X	Councillor Activity
----------	-------------------------	-------------	-----------------	-------------------	---------------------

This report provides Council with an update on the work of the Annapolis Valley Regional Library Board over the past several months, including the process leading to the Board's recent restructuring decisions and where things currently stand.

Over the past several months, the Board has been working through significant financial challenges facing the Annapolis Valley Regional Library. Following several months of review, discussion and planning, the Board approved a restructuring plan that included changes to library services, staffing and branch operations across the region. Those decisions were publicly announced in June 2026.

Since the announcement, discussions have continued with municipal funding partners and the Province. The Board has continued to receive updates as those discussions have progressed, and a special meeting was held on July 13, 2026, to consider the most recent information and determine next steps.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the work completed by the Board, how these decisions were reached, and where things currently stand.

DISCUSSION

The financial challenges facing the Annapolis Valley Regional Library have been discussed for several years and have been included in previous updates to Council. Over the past several months, however, the Board's work became almost entirely focused on working through those challenges and determining what a sustainable regional library system could realistically look like with the funding available.

The Board did not begin this process by deciding which branches would close. The first step was determining what level of library service could be sustained with the funding available. Before discussing individual branches or service models, the Board participated in its first facilitated planning session where it established the principles that would guide every discussion. This ensured every option would be evaluated using the same criteria and that decisions remained focused on the long-term sustainability of the regional library system.

The Board's guiding principles were:

- Taking a regional approach to library service.
- Supporting a stable workforce.
- Developing a financially sustainable plan.
- Maintaining library collections and access to materials.

These principles were established before individual options were considered so that every possible scenario could be evaluated consistently throughout the process.

Throughout this process, the Board was responsible for considering the library system as a whole. Although Board members are appointed by individual municipalities, our responsibility is to make decisions in the best interests of the regional library system. That regional perspective guided every discussion throughout the process.

The work leading to the Board's decisions took place over several months through regular Board meetings, Executive meetings and two facilitated planning sessions. During that time, the Board reviewed detailed financial information, considered different service models and multiple possible scenarios, discussed the impacts of various options, and asked a significant number of questions before any decisions were made.

The second facilitated planning session focused on applying the Board's guiding principles to the options that had been developed. The Board reviewed multiple possible paths forward before ultimately approving the restructuring plan. Some options reduced services across the entire region, while others affected specific locations. Each option was measured against the Board's guiding principles, the financial information available at the time, and the goal of creating a library system that could continue to operate in a financially sustainable way.

The restructuring plan ultimately approved by the Board was intended to provide a financially sustainable operating plan for the next three fiscal years based on the funding available at the

time. Taking a long-term approach, rather than focusing on a single budget year, remained an important consideration throughout the Board's discussions and decision-making.

While the Board's role was to review information and make governance decisions, a considerable amount of work also took place between Board meetings. CEO Julia Merritt continued discussions with municipal CAOs, Heads of Council, provincial representatives, union representatives and other partners regarding the library's financial position, funding options and long-term sustainability. Together, the CEO and Board Chair also maintained ongoing communication with municipal funding partners and the Province as discussions continued. The information gathered through those discussions, together with ongoing financial analysis and operational information provided by staff, was brought back to the Board to help inform its discussions and decision-making.

Municipal partners were invited to an information session on July 7, 2026, to receive background on the financial challenges facing the organization, the work completed by the Board, and the process that led to the restructuring decision. Municipal representatives had the opportunity to ask questions, share feedback and discuss possible next steps.

On July 8, 2026, AVRL Board Chair Janet Ness and CEO Julia Merritt also met with representatives from the Province to continue discussions regarding the Library's financial situation and potential options moving forward. Together with updated financial information and feedback received through ongoing discussions with municipal funding partners and the Province, the Board called a special meeting for July 13, 2026, to consider the most recent information and determine next steps.

The special Board meeting was held on July 13, 2026, to consider the most recent information received following discussions with municipal funding partners and the Province.

The Board reviewed updated financial information, the communications with municipal funding partners and the Province, and the guiding principles and criteria that had informed the Board's restructuring decisions. This provided an opportunity to consider whether changing circumstances warranted any changes to the implementation of the Board's original decision while continuing to protect the long-term sustainability of the regional library system.

Throughout this process, the Board continued to receive updated financial information and feedback as discussions progressed. While the Board remained confident that its restructuring plan provided a sustainable path forward based on the funding available, it also remained open to considering new information as it became available. This allowed the Board to continue evaluating the situation while remaining focused on its responsibility to ensure the long-term sustainability of the regional library system.

Following its review, the Board approved a temporary extension of library service at the five branches previously scheduled for closure until September 30, 2026.

The Board also reaffirmed its request to the eight funding municipalities for the additional financial contributions originally requested earlier this year. Based on the financial projections

reviewed by the Board, however, those municipal contributions alone would not maintain operations through the end of the fiscal year, and additional funding would still be required.

Throughout the discussion, Board members acknowledged their fiduciary responsibility and legal obligation to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the organization. There was significant discussion about the importance of maintaining a portion of the Library's unrestricted operating reserves while providing additional time for municipal and provincial discussions to continue.

NEXT STEPS

The CEO will be contacting each of the eight funding municipalities regarding the Board's reaffirmed request for the additional financial contributions originally requested earlier this year.

West Hants Regional Municipality has previously approved an additional contribution, subject to both the Windsor and Hantsport branches remaining open. Council may wish to confirm that contribution following the Board's revised decision.

Discussions between the Annapolis Valley Regional Library, municipal funding partners and the Province are expected to continue over the coming weeks as longer-term funding options are explored.

I will continue to keep Council informed as discussions progress and provide further updates following future Board meetings, as appropriate.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this information report. The Board's decision to temporarily extend library service until September 30, 2026, is being funded through the Annapolis Valley Regional Library's unrestricted operating reserves.

Council has previously approved an additional municipal contribution, subject to both the Windsor and Hantsport branches remaining open. Confirmation of that contribution may be considered by Council following the Board's revised decision.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Public library services play an important role in providing equitable access to information, technology, programming and community spaces. Throughout this process, the Board considered the impact of its decisions on communities across the region while working toward a financially sustainable library system.

ALTERNATIVES

Not Applicable – Information Report.

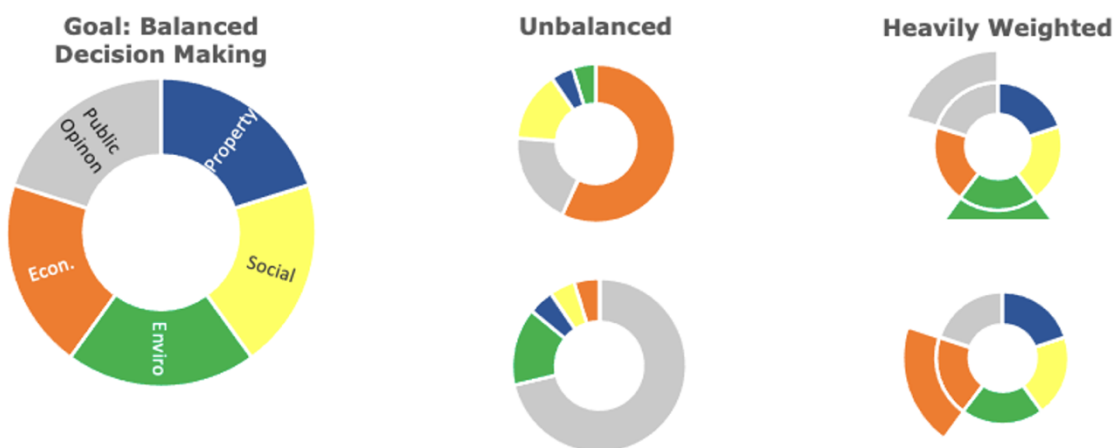
ATTACHMENTS

None.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

(For use if report is from a Councillor. CAO to provide additional comments on background, department/staff responsible and workload, budget, options, preferred strategy. State "Not Applicable" if report is from staff which already incorporates CAO review.)

Council has been provided with a reference taken from the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy , Appendix C "Decision Making by Council and Committee of the Whole" as a reminder of the principles highlighted for good decision making.



Report Prepared by: Chrystal Remme, Councillor District 3

Report Reviewed by: _____
(Name and Title)

Report Approved by: _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer