

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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2017/18 Provincial Budget Implications for Saskatoon Public Library Patrons

SASKATOON, SK – The impact of the 2017/18 provincial budget leaves Saskatoon Public Library (SPL) with an annual operating shortfall of close to \$800,000, reducing SPL's ability to meet the needs and demands of library services in our community. No longer simply book repositories, libraries are vibrant and welcoming community gathering places that offer a wide range of digital services in addition to their physical collections.

The elimination of the operating grant will limit SPL's ability to support provincial commitments. In addition, the grant for supporting library services for Indigenous people was also eliminated. This grant helped fund many initiatives and services to promote inclusion and cultural awareness, threatening the progress SPL has made in this area in the last few years.

The combined impact of the funding gap is equivalent to the annual operating costs of J.S. Wood Branch, or the combined spending on children's library services in Saskatoon. With demand for library services very high in Saskatoon, SPL intends to maintain as many core services as possible, however, the reduced operating budget will render SPL's ability to provide services at the current level unsustainable. SPL is taking immediate measures to reduce discretionary spending.

SPL's Board will meet in April to provide direction as to how SPL will achieve balancing the operating budget. The Board views these cuts as drastic and short-sighted, particularly considering our province's economic climate and the statistics indicating SPL's facilities are more relied upon today than ever before.

This budget comes as SPL releases the [2016 Report to Our Community](#), which showcases the increasing usage of nearly all SPL services, programs and materials. This report provides solid evidence that SPL is a critical and valued public service and that, as a whole, public libraries help build and maintain communities. Some takeaways from the report include 1,429,369 patron visits, 92,939 program attendees, a 35% increase in active users, and 12,662 new library cards being issued. Moreover, residents rely on SPL for access to other services as evidenced by the high demand for public computer usage with 186,599 computer sessions and 106,107 sessions on SPL's free public WiFi in 2016. The demand for e-resources is growing, however, their usage represents only 16% of SPL's 2016 circulation.

Founded on values of intellectual freedom and equitable access, SPL is a community pillar and a bastion of democracy, providing refuge for society's most vulnerable and leave no one behind. It is for these reasons that libraries are, in fact, most critical and accessed when an economy is in decline.

Information regarding the impact of the budget on SPL's provincial commitments will be released tomorrow.

The 2016 Report to Our Community can be viewed online at saskatoonlibrary.ca/report.

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