

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SPL's involvement in provincial electronic holds and materials delivery service requires full restoration of provincial funding

SASKATOON, SK – The 2017/18 provincial budget cut operating grants to regional libraries, and in the case of Saskatoon Public Library (SPL), eliminated it entirely. In addition to the operating grant, the \$30,000 grant for indigenous library services was removed. The total impact from the provincial budget leaves SPL with an annual operating shortfall of close to \$800,000. This shortfall is very significant and is equivalent to the annual operating costs of J.S. Wood Branch, or the combined spending on children's library services in Saskatoon.

In response, SPL has taken immediate measures to reduce discretionary spending, and along with all of the other libraries in the province, cancelled the holds and materials delivery service effective April 10, 2017. These reductions are not enough to balance the operating budget, and SPL will be making substantial cuts to our existing operations, which will be announced in the coming weeks. There will be no funds available to continue the in-province holds service.

The \$1.1 million estimate reported in the media, covers only the province's contribution for the holds service, which is a portion of the overall cost. The majority of the costs associated with providing the holds and delivery service is carried by the library systems, including Saskatoon and Regina Public Libraries. For SPL, there are significant staffing costs associated with shipping and receiving items, in addition to in-City transportation.

As the largest library system in the province, SPL bears a significant cost to participate in provincial libraries initiatives, which can only be made possible with provincial funding.

"Without our provincial grant, the cost of supporting the holds and materials delivery service will have to be carried on the backs of Saskatoon municipal taxpayers. With the budget challenges imposed on the City of Saskatoon, this is not a reasonable request for SPL to make," said Carol Cooley, Director of Libraries and CEO of Saskatoon Public Library. "Without the provincial funding restored, it will not be possible for SPL to participate in electronic holds and materials delivery service," she added.

In 2016, as a result of the provincial funding available, SPL filled more holds for patrons than any other library system (138,528 or 20% of the total province). In addition, SPL also circulated nearly 50% of all materials through the provincial reciprocal borrowing service. The cancellation of the electronic holds and materials delivery system will impact Saskatoon residents who use this service (Saskatoon borrowed 28% of all holds from other systems in 2016). However, SPL patrons borrow from other libraries what is equivalent to only 5% of SPL's annual circulation.

"If this service is deemed important to Saskatchewan, funding will need to be restored by the provincial government, as library systems, including SPL, will not be able to absorb the significant costs to participate," said Cooley.

SPL values the service philosophy behind the "One Province, One Library Card" service and would like to see the holds and materials delivery restored across the province through the restoration of grants to public libraries. SPL also urges the grant for Indigenous library services to be restored to support libraries in their work in responding to the Truth & Reconciliation's Calls to Action.

SPL would also like to provide clarification for the media and public around some of the terms being used to describe services.

Holds and Materials Delivery Service – The service allows anyone with a valid library card in Saskatchewan to place electronic holds on materials from any library in the province, and then have those materials delivered to their local branch. As of April 10, 2017, this service will no longer be available.

Inter-Library Loans – This service allows for loans between provinces. This service will continue.

Reciprocal Borrowing – The service allows anyone with a valid library card in Saskatchewan to physically borrow materials from any library in the province, and then return those materials at their local branch. This service is currently under review to determine if it can continue.

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