

Annapolis Valley Regional Library

Regular Board Meeting

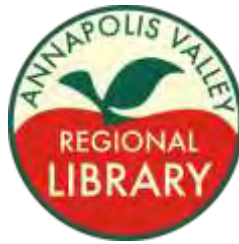
Thursday, April 16, 2026

5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

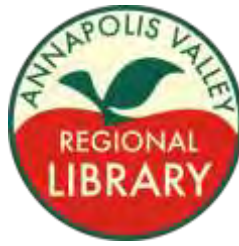
In Person; Berwick Council Chambers

Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting
 - 3.1 Minutes of the February 19, 2026 Meeting
 - 3.2 Record of the Online Motion and Vote March 16, 2026
4. Guests/Presentations: Cléo Burke & Larry MacEachern, Certified Integral Facilitators
Closed/In camera: facilitated session addressing sensitive material
 - 4.1 Pre-reading package, for consideration prior to meeting:
 - 4.1.1 Pre-Session Reflection Questions
 - 4.1.2 Davis Pier: AVRL Library Services Review
 - 4.1.3 AVRL Strategic Plan 2025-2028
 - 4.1.4 Nova Scotia's Public Library Funding Model and AVRL
 - 4.1.5 March 2026 AVRL Staff Survey
 - 4.1.6 AVRL At a Glance
5. Correspondence and Communications
 - 5.1 Received: selected correspondence from the public:
 - 5.1.1 Feb 19/26 Town of Middleton to CCTH
 - 5.1.2 Feb 24/26 Town of Annapolis Royal to AVRL
 - 5.1.3 Mar 04/26 @NS to CCTH
 - 5.1.4 Mar 11/26 Same Page to CCTH
 - 5.1.5 Mar 23/26 CCTH to CORL re: Feb 12/26
 - 5.1.6 Mar 25/26 WHRM to AVRL
 - 5.1.7 Apr 1/26 County of Kings to AVRL
 - 5.1.8 Apr 8/26: Town of Wolfville to AVRL
 - 5.2 Sent:
 - 5.2.1 Apr 08/26 AVRL to CCTH
6. Business Arising from the Previous Meeting:
7. Committee Reports
 - 7.1 Executive Committee
 - 7.2 Human Resources Committee
 - 7.3 Finance Committee
 - 7.3.1 Financial Updates



- 7.3.2 Income Statement April 1, 2025 – February 28, 2026
- 7.3.3 Deferred Revenue report April 1, 2025 – February 28, 2026
- 7.3.4 Investment report: none
- 7.3.5 Investment Subcommittee report: none
- 8. Report from the Chief Executive Officer
 - 8.1 Update from the CEO: see 7.3.1 Financial Updates
 - 8.2 Statistical Reports: year-end numbers to be confirmed
- 9. New Business
 - 9.1 Strategic Plan Progress Report 2025-28
 - 9.2 AVRL Board Response to AVRL Staff Survey
- 10. In camera:
 - 10.1 Labour relations updates (verbal)
 - 10.2 Matters pertaining to an identifiable individual
- 11. Announcements from Board Members
- 12. Nova Scotia Libraries News and Updates
 - 12.1 Mar 17/26: PARL Press Release
 - 12.2 Apr 06/26: AVRL SaltWire Article
 - 12.3 Apr 09/26: Cumberland Unionization
- 13. Next meetings:
 - Extra Meeting:** Thursday, April 23rd, 5:30-7:30 VIA ZOOM
 - Saturday May 2, 9am-4pm, Berwick Apple Dome, Facilitated workshop**
 - Thursday, June 18th, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm Regular and AGM
 - Thursday, September 17th, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm
 - Thursday, November 19th, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm
- 14. Adjournment



Annapolis Valley Regional Library

Regular Board Meeting

Thursday, February 19, 2026

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

In Person

Minutes (DRAFT)

PRESENT: Janet Ness, Jill Cox, Adele MacDonald, Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman, Ty Walsh, Emily Lutz, Samantha Hamilton

STAFF: Julia Merritt (CEO), Carin Cress, Samantha Driscoll, Beth Kawecki, Jai Soloy

REGRETS: Chrystal Remme

1. Call to order

J. Ness called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: To approve Agenda as presented.

Moved by: Jill Cox

Seconded by: Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman

CARRIED

3. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1 Minutes of the November 20, 2025 Meeting

MOTION: To approve the minutes of November 20th, 2025 in-person meeting.

Moved by: Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman

Seconded by: Adele MacDonald

CARRIED

4. Guests/Presentations: none

5. Correspondence and Communications

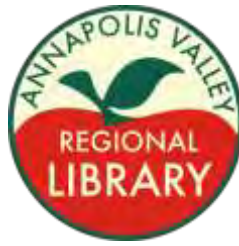
5.1 Received: selected correspondence from the public:

5.1.1 Nov 14/25, Kathryn E. Martin to Councillor Sappington

5.1.2 Dec 1/25, Friends of the AR Library to MLA Bowlby

5.1.3 Jan 09/26, Lorna Mulligan to elected representatives

5.2 Sent:



MOTION: To accept the May 2026 facilitation quote to include preparation for engagement and facilitation of a strategic decision-making with the board and management in the amount of \$18,800.

MOVED BY: Emily Lutz **SECONDED BY:** Jill Cox

CARRIED

MOTION: THAT the AVRL Board adopts the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Position Statement as presented AND THAT the AVRL Board approves the corrections to the Code of Conduct policy.

MOVED BY: Emily Lutz **SECONDED BY:** Ty Walsh

CARRIED

10. In camera: labour relations update (verbal)

MOTION: To move in camera; 6:19 pm.

MOVED BY: Ty Walsh **SECONDED BY:** Jill Cox

CARRIED

MOTION: To move out of camera; 6:26 pm.

MOVED BY: Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman **SECONDED BY:** Emily Lutz

CARRIED

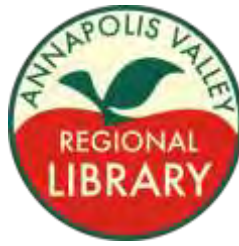
MOTION: To receive the information presented in camera.

MOVED BY: Adele MacDonald **SECONDED BY:** Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman

CARRIED

11. Announcements from Board Members

None



12. Next meetings:

Thursday, April 16th, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm-9pm **Workshop Preparation**

Saturday May 2, 9am-4pm, Berwick Apple Dome, Facilitated workshop:

Operational planning with updated budget information

Thursday, June 18th, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm Regular and AGM

Thursday, September 17th, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm

Thursday, November 19th, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm

13. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 6:29 pm.

MOVED BY: Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman

CARRIED

February 19, 2026

Honourable Dave Ritcey
Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick Street, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 456, STN Central
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2R5

Dear Honourable Minister Ritcey:

Re: 2026-2027 AVRL Operating Budget and Provincial Cost-Sharing Confirmation

On behalf of the Town of Middleton Council, I am writing regarding the 2026-2027 operating budget submission from the Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL), established under the *Libraries Act*.

In its submission, the AVRL Board outlined significant financial pressures that now place library services at risk. Since 2009, AVRL's operating budget has increased by approximately 10%, while inflation has risen by roughly 43% over the same period. To manage these pressures, AVRL has implemented substantial cost-saving measures, including:

- A 25% reduction in permanent staffing between 2015 and 2024
- Elimination of the bookmobile service in 2021
- A 50% reduction in programming and the elimination of certain partnerships as of 2024
- Bringing payroll processing in-house to reduce contracted service costs

Despite these measures, the 2025-2026 budget is operating in a deficit position, funded through operating reserves. AVRL anticipates that its operating reserve will be reduced by approximately \$250,000 this year, leaving roughly \$400,000 available for 2026-2027. The proposed 2026-2027 budget reflects a projected deficit of \$528,280.

AVRL has requested a 50% increase in municipal contributions to support its upcoming operating budget. Even with the requested increase of \$351,450, AVRL's 2026-27 budget would still be in an overall deficit position of \$176,830.

Without additional funding support from its funding partners, the AVRL Board has indicated that significant service reductions will be required in 2026-2027. These reductions could include further staffing cuts, decreased hours of operation, closure of branches, reduced programming, diminished collection development, and other measures that would directly affect residents' access to core library services.

At its February 17th meeting, Council reviewed AVRL's request and approved an increase of \$1,600, subject to provincial confirmation of its share. The approved increase by Middleton Town Council is 26% of the requested amount, which is consistent with our traditional proportional share under the legislated cost-sharing framework. This reflects Middleton's ongoing support for regional library services and the important role AVRL plays in promoting literacy, community engagement, and equitable access to library resources throughout the Annapolis Valley.

Council recognizes that the current request is only intended to stabilize service levels for one additional year. Council is concerned that the Provincial Library Funding Formula expired on March 31, 2025, and that no confirmation has been provided regarding the Province's intended contribution for 2026-2027 and beyond. The cost-sharing model established under the *Libraries Act* has historically ensured a balanced and predictable distribution of operating costs between the Province, participating municipalities, and regional library boards.

Council respectfully requests confirmation of the Province's intended funding contribution toward the 2026-2027 AVRL operating budget and encourages the Province to support its equitable share consistent with the established model. The Town of Middleton values its partnership with the Province and fellow municipal units in supporting strong regional library services.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We would appreciate your response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Gail Smith

Mayor

Town of Middleton

C: Julia Merritt, CEO, Annapolis Valley Regional Library
Janet Ness, Board Chair, Annapolis Valley Regional Library
David Bowlby, MLA, Annapolis

Town of Annapolis Royal



February 24, 2026

via E-mail

Julia Merritt, CEO
Annapolis Valley Regional Library

Re: 2026–2027 Operating Budget Request

Dear Ms. Merritt,

Thank you for your January 5, 2026 correspondence outlining the 2026–2027 operating budget request and the financial pressures currently facing the Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL).

Council recognizes the important role libraries play in our communities and acknowledges the fiscal challenges resulting from the expiration of the provincial funding formula and inflationary pressures.

After careful review, Council is prepared to approve the requested increase in Annapolis Royal's contribution for the 2026–2027 fiscal year only, increasing our annual contribution from \$3,400 to \$5,100 as outlined in your proposal.

However, it is important to clarify that the quarterly remittance to AVRL is not the Town's only library-related expense. Our total estimated municipal budget allocation supporting library services in 2026–2027 is \$27,714.

With an overall municipal operating budget of approximately \$3.11 million supported by only 420 taxable accounts, Library spending now equates to approximately 0.9% of the operating budget. In a small municipality with a limited tax base, increases in any single service area have a measurable impact on overall fiscal capacity.

While we understand the financial pressures facing AVRL, Council strongly encourages the Board to exhaust all other available options before considering any branch closures.

Annapolis Royal also continues to request that the Board consider amending its current investment policy to allow greater flexibility in the use of Evan's Bequest beyond capital expenditures, as a means of supporting operational sustainability.

We also note that this matter has been raised with the Province through correspondence from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities to the Honourable David Ritcey, Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. We remain hopeful that further clarity on the provincial funding formula and bridge funding will be forthcoming.

Council remains committed to working collaboratively with AVRL and our municipal partners to ensure continued access to library services in Annapolis Royal, while also maintaining fiscal responsibility to our taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Sandi Millett-Campbell
On behalf of Council
Town of Annapolis Royal



Honourable David Ritcey
Department of Communities, Culture,
Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick St., 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 456, STN Central
Halifax, NS
B3J 2R5

March 4, 2026

Dear Minister Ritcey,

On February 24, 2026, just over a month away from the end of our fiscal year and the start of a new one, we were informed by your department that we would not be receiving any funding for 2026-27. We feel it is imperative that the Minister responsible for this decision be aware of the impact it will have on our members and the patrons they serve.

The Community Technology Association of Nova Scotia (operating name: @NS) was formed following the demise of the federal Community Access Program (CAP). The Province of Nova Scotia recognized the gap the complete elimination of this program would leave, and worked with our organization to help bridge those gaps. Since our inception in 2016, @NS has provided vital services to our members and the communities they serve. While the list is lengthy, here are some of the main programs we've been involved in over the last decade:

- Provided close to 300 temporary jobs to youth around the province, allowing them to gain valuable, real world experience in the work force while providing patrons with technology training.
- These youth, mostly hired during the summer months, helped hundreds of people navigate the ever changing world of technology during their time with us. They also played a role in propping up valuable industries in Nova Scotia, such as tourism, arts, and culture. The vast majority of these jobs were provided in rural areas to rural youth, serving rural patrons. Without further funding, this program will end.
- Through grants and our own funding, we have hired dozens of trainers to work specifically with seniors in Nova Scotia to help with their technology needs and concerns. This one-on-one training is vital for seniors looking to stay within their own homes, remain independent, and keep in touch with loved ones no longer living close by. This program, which is currently running, will not be able to continue in the new fiscal year without funding. Again, the main impact will be in rural areas.
- For the past three years, we have been running a wireless hotspot lending program at various sites around Nova Scotia outside of Halifax. Patrons who cannot access the internet at home due to financial or geographical issues can borrow one of these devices and use for a set length of time before returning it. This program has had excellent uptake in several areas. Without further funding, it will end in December, 2026.
- @NS has issued several technology grants over the years allowing libraries, community centres, and others to purchase technology for public use, as well as STEM-related items aimed at getting kids involved and interested in coding, engineering, science, and math. We have no choice but to halt this program in the 2026-27 year.

Our sites, many already struggling to stay open despite the need in their areas, serve under-represented and traditionally marginalized populations in this province, including the Acadian Community in the Yarmouth area, the African-Nova Scotia community in Guysborough, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, indigenous people, members of visible minorities, the homeless, children and youth, those with employment barriers, seniors, and the LGBTQ community by providing support with the navigation of the many resources on the internet that may help alleviate their plight and increase their interest in technology. Many in marginalized groups traditionally seek out community technology sites as a safe space and a space where they can use resources for free that they may not be able to access otherwise. Without funding, these resources are in grave danger of going away forever.

Over the next few weeks, you and other members of this government will be hearing more from us, as well as our members, who we will be encouraging to reach out to elected representatives in their areas regarding these concerns. We understand the need for fiscal prudence. This latest round of cuts seem to be disproportionately directed at the most vulnerable Nova Scotians, which includes our clients. It is an unfortunate decision that will have imminent far-reaching and hard hitting impacts.

Sincerely,

Ryan McKenzie

Ryan McKenzie
President
Community Technology Network of Nova Scotia
On behalf of our Board of Directors





March 11, 2026

Honourable Dave Ritcey
Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick Street, 3rd Floor
PO Box 456, Station Central
Halifax, NS B3J 2R5

Dear Minister Ritcey,

In 2021, with support and funding from CCTH, the 8 non-HRM regional library systems in Nova Scotia launched the Same Page Alliance Consortium. By allowing residents to seamlessly borrow materials across regional boundaries, Same Page has dramatically expanded access to collections without duplicating resources or infrastructure, *ensuring that geography does not determine the level of service a Nova Scotian receives*. Same Page has become one of the most effective and visible examples of regional collaboration in Nova Scotia's public library system that enhances equity for all rural Nova Scotians.

CCTH was instrumental in the creation and ongoing support of Same Page and now we are writing to request assistance with the growing pressures created by its success. Before Same Page, libraries shipped a five-year average of approximately 3,100 items per month between regions. Today, that figure has increased to an average of **24,635 items per month**—an increase of roughly 695%. This growth reflects strong public demand and the program's success in delivering equitable access province-wide.

In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, Same Page member libraries spent **\$166,917 on postage costs alone**. This does not include staff time, or shipping materials. CCTH has helped support some of these costs with Library Development Fund grants. But that grant alone is not enough. We require sustainable operational grant funding to keep this successful endeavor afloat. Same Page exemplifies what strategic public investment can achieve: a shared service that maximizes public value, reduces duplication, and delivers measurable benefits to Nova Scotians across the province. Without a sustainable approach to funding shipping and associated staffing costs, libraries risk being penalized for the program's success—diverting funds from collections, programs, and core services to maintain a service the public has come to rely on.

We appreciate the province's continued support of public libraries and recognize the challenging fiscal environment. We offer Same Page as a clear example of how relatively small, strategic investments can preserve and strengthen services that are already working well for Nova Scotians.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Denise Corey'.

Denise Corey
Chair, One Library Card Alliance (Same Page)
c/o Cumberland Public Libraries
PO Box 220, Amherst, NS B4H 3Z2

My work hours may not be your work hours.

Please don't feel obligated to respond outside of your normal work day.

[Quoted text hidden]

Julia Merritt <jmerritt@valleylibrary.ca>

Wed, Feb 18, 2026 at 11:39 AM

To: Ashley Nunn-Smith <ashley@ssplibraries.ca>

Cc: CORL list <chiefs.regions@lists.library.ns.ca>, "Somers, Lynn M" <Lynn.Somers@novascotia.ca>

There's always one typo that will get you! Doesn't take away from the entirety of the letter. Thanks for leading its writing.

Julia Merritt

Chief Executive Officer

Annapolis Valley Regional Library

236 Commercial St PO Box 510

Berwick NS B0P 1E0

1-902-538-2665 x1102

www.valleylibrary.ca

[Quoted text hidden]

Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage via Chiefs.regions

Mon, Mar 23, 2026 at

<chiefs.regions@lists.library.ns.ca>

11:54 AM

Reply-To: "Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage" <MIN_CCTH@novascotia.ca>

To: Ashley Nunn-Smith <ashley@ssplibraries.ca>

Cc: "Dean, Kelliann M" <Kelliann.Dean@novascotia.ca>, "jspencer@nsfm.ca" <jspencer@nsfm.ca>, Premier

<PREMIER@novascotia.ca>, "elanni@nsfm.ca" <elanni@nsfm.ca>, "Shore, Christopher"

<Christopher.Shore@novascotia.ca>, CORL <chiefs.regions@lists.library.ns.ca>, "Halliday, Sara D"

<Sara.Halliday@novascotia.ca>, "Somers, Lynn M" <Lynn.Somers@novascotia.ca>, David Mitchell

<David.Mitchell@bridgewater.ca>, "Smith, Stephanie N" <Stephanie.N.Smith@novascotia.ca>

Dear Ashley Nunn-Smith:

Thank you for your letter of February 13, 2026, written on behalf of Nova Scotia's nine regional libraries regarding sustainable funding for Nova Scotia's public libraries.

Like you, I believe that public libraries are important community assets. You have demonstrated your strategic position and willingness to assist government in getting resources and information to Nova Scotians. Your contributions to the communities you serve are significant.

Also, I am aware of the challenges that the public libraries face as you serve your communities. I look forward to working collaboratively with the sector to address the issues and find solutions for sustainable funding for Nova Scotia's public libraries.

Thank you for your letter and for the services you and your colleagues provide to your communities.

Sincerely,

Hon. Dave Ritcey
Minister



March 25, 2026

Julia Merritt, Chief Executive Officer
Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL)
236 Commercial Street
PO Box 510
Berwick, Nova Scotia
B0P 1E0

Delivered electronically to: jmerritt@valleylibrary.ca

RE: Funding Update and Contingency Planning

Dear Ms. Merritt,

Please accept the following correspondence on behalf of the Council for the West Hants Regional Municipality (WHRM), in response to your request for increased funding for the 2026/27 fiscal period.

To recap, during the February 10, 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting, correspondence from yourself was presented and discussed. The request outlined a funding request and highlighted the challenges the AVRL is currently facing. Specifically, the Board requested a one-year, 50% increase in municipal contributions for the 2026 –2027 fiscal year, representing a total contribution of \$201,600 from the WHRM. It was noted that without additional support, libraries would likely experience service impacts, and that funding requirements beyond this period have not yet been determined.

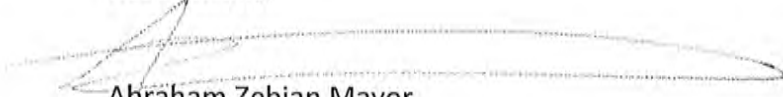
At the March 24, 2026 Council meeting, Council carefully considered this request and recognized that libraries serve as vital community hubs for residents of all ages, providing programs, access to technology, and educational materials that might otherwise not be unavailable to the public. Considering these contributions, Council affirms its support for the library service and acknowledges the importance of maintaining consistent services for all residents.

This position has been formally endorsed through the following motion passed at the Council Meeting held on March 24, 2026:

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS WHEADON AND P. MORTON THAT COUNCIL ALLOCATE THE MANDATORY LIBRARY FUNDING PLUS AN ADDITIONAL 50% FUNDING FOR A TOTAL OF \$201,600 FOR THE 2026/27 FISCAL YEAR TO THE ANNAPOLIS VALLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD WITH THE ADDITIONAL 50% FUNDING CONTINGENT ON SERVICE LEVELS REMAINING THE SAME FOR BOTH THE HANTSPORT AND WINDSOR LIBRARIES AND CONFIRMATION OF SUCH FROM THE LIBRARY BOARD WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THIS APPROVAL".

While the proposed funding is contingent upon service levels remaining uninterrupted in the WHRM, Council remains committed to working collaboratively with the Library Board to ensure that residents continue to have reliable access to these vital services. We value the ongoing partnership between the WHRM and the AVRL and look forward to your response and exploring sustainable solutions that support the library's mission while maintaining service standards.

Respectfully,



Abraham Zebian Mayor

az/ds

CC: West Hants Regional Municipal Council
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer



MUNICIPALITY *of the*
COUNTY *of* KINGS

Tel: 902-690-6132

Fax: 902-678-9279

mayor.corkum@countyofkings.ca

April 1, 2026

Chair Janet Ness
Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL)
236 Commercial Street
Berwick, NS B0P 1E0

via email to: administration@valleylibrary.ca

RE: 2026-27 Operating Budget Request

Dear Chair Ness,

Thank you for your letter of January 5, 2026, which outlined the Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL) Board's request to increase municipal contributions by 50% for the 2026-27 fiscal year.

I am writing to inform you that on Wednesday April 1, 2026, Municipal Council carefully reviewed this request. Council engaged in thoughtful debate and acknowledged the difficult trade-offs libraries face as they seek additional funding to avoid reducing services. I am pleased to share that the Municipality of the County of Kings' Council passed a motion to provide an increase in funding to AVRL of \$82,900, for a total municipal contribution of \$414,500, for the 2026-27 fiscal year. Our staff at the Municipality will reach out to Julia Merritt, Chief Executive Officer at AVRL, to discuss the details of the funding.

Municipal Council is aware of AVRL's intentions to discuss service levels, fund raising efforts, and sustainable funding solutions for the libraries within our Region. The Municipality looks forward to hearing from the AVRL Board about the outcome of these discussions.

The Municipality remains hopeful the advocacy efforts to the Provincial Government from libraries, the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, and municipalities will be successful. As previously mentioned, I am willing to support the AVRL in any discussions with the Provincial Government to improve funding for libraries.

Respectfully,

Dave Corkum
Mayor

Phone: 902-678-6141 or 1-888-337-2999

Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

inquiry@countyofkings.ca

181 Coldbrook Village Park Drive
Coldbrook, NS B4R 1B9
www.countyofkings.ca

cc: Julia Merritt, CEO Annapolis Valley Regional Library
West Hants Regional Municipality
Town of Wolfville
Town of Kentville
Town of Berwick
Town of Middleton
Town of Annapolis Royal
Municipality of the County of Annapolis
Municipality of the County of Kings

Phone: 902-678-6141 or 1-888-337-2999
Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
inquiry@countyofkings.ca

181 Coldbrook Village Park Drive
Coldbrook, NS B4R 1B9
www.countyofkings.ca



April 8, 2026

Julia Merritt, CEO
Annapolis Valley Regional Library
236 Commercial Street
Berwick, Nova Scotia
B0P 1E0
Via email: jmerritt@valleylibrary.ca

Dear Ms. Merritt,

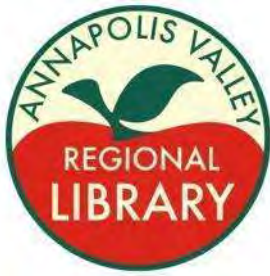
This letter is to advise that the Town of Wolfville Council has made a decision regarding the Annapolis Valley Regional Library's request for increased municipal funding for the 2026/27 fiscal year.

Following careful consideration, Council has approved a one-time increase of \$3,939 to its annual operating contribution. This brings the Town's total contribution to \$34,239 for the 2026/27 fiscal year and reflects Wolfville's proportionate municipal share (26%) of the requested increase in accordance with the established funding formula.

In reaching this decision, Council considered the Town's responsibilities as a municipal partner, its current fiscal framework, and the broader context of provincial funding for regional library services. Council acknowledges the importance of the services provided by the Annapolis Valley Regional Library and appreciates the ongoing efforts of the Board and staff.

Sincerely,
Glenn Horne, CAO

cc. Janet Nes, AVRL Board Member – Town of Wolfville



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 Dave Ritcey
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

April 8, 2026

Dear Minister Ritcey,

On behalf of the Annapolis Valley Regional Library, I am writing to update you on the severity of the situation at AVRL. We must be direct about the impacts of the Province's 2026-27 budget: without sustainable increases in funding to the Library Funding Formula, and without Bridge funding in 2026-27, the AVRL is facing unprecedented branch closures and service reductions.

In 2026-27, the AVRL faces a deficit of nearly \$600,000 including wage adjustments. With static funding since 2019, AVRL has undertaken the following strategies to mitigate the ongoing rise in operating expenses:

1. Reduced the total permanent staffing complement by 25%;
2. Reduced programming and services, including partnerships with government;
3. Purchased books and software through consortia; and
4. Used previously-accumulated surplus.

At current, outdated funding levels, the next step in 2026 will be to severely reduce branch open hours, limit access to new books, and further scale back programs and partnerships.

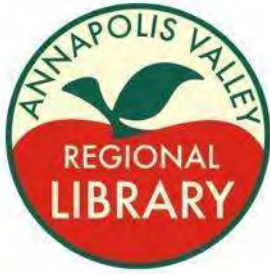
For the 2026-27 fiscal year, AVRL has also made separate and individual requests to the AVRL's partnering municipalities for an increase to their funding contributions. Although all responses to date have included a commitment for additional funds, the amounts are not great enough to forestall severe and widespread impact to communities across the region.

Sustainable funding for public libraries is an urgent priority. With sustainable investment, AVRL will be able to resume services and resources to our communities and continue to serve as reliable partners in affordability, housing, health, and lifelong learning.

Thank you for your attention and continued support.

Sincerely,

Janet Ness, Chair, Annapolis Valley Regional Library Board



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

CC: The Honourable Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia, MLA for Pictou East

Ms. Jill Balser, MLA for Digby-Annapolis

Mr. David Bowlby, MLA for Annapolis

Mr. John Lohr, MLA for Kings North

Mr. Chris Palmer, MLA for Kings West

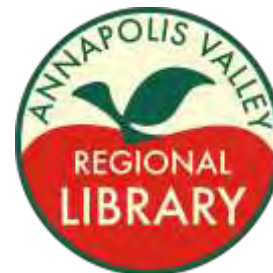
Ms. Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA for Hants West

Ms. Julie Vanexan, MLA for Kings South

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

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

Report



To: AVRIL Board
From: Julia Merritt, CEO
Date: April 16, 2026
Re: Financial Updates

This report is presented for information.

Budget Updates

1. Ministry of Culture, Communities, Tourism & Heritage

- Funding for NS public libraries will remain at the 2020-2025 rate, or \$16.4 million for the Province's share
- The additional \$1.6 million Bridge funding that the Province provided in 2025-26 was not included in the core funding for 2026-27.
- For AVRIL in 2025-26 the Bridge funding represented \$193,000, or 7% of the existing funding formula amount. 50% of this Bridge amount was included in AVRIL's forecasting (interim budget approved Nov 20, 2025). **Without it, the deficit increases to approximately \$625,000.**

2. CORL / Same Page Alliance responses

- In April, the Nova Scotia libraries will send a joint letter once again requesting emergency "Bridge" funding for 2026-27.
- In March, the Same Page Alliance sent a separate letter requesting sustainable support for Same Page. The Same Page project has historically been well-supported by government as an initiative of equity and efficiency.

3. Municipal responses to request for increase

AVRIL requested a total of \$351,450 from the eight funding municipal units. As of this writing on April 10th, the following municipalities have replied to AVRIL with their 2026-27 budget decisions:

Municipality	Additional Amount Requested	Amount Granted	% of Request
Annapolis County	\$65,350	\$16,991	26%
Annapolis Royal	\$1,700	\$1,700	100%
Berwick	\$6,500	Unknown	
County of Kings	\$165,800	\$82,900	50%
Kentville	\$21,400	\$21,400 proposed	100%
Middleton	\$6,150	\$1,600	26%
West Hants	\$67,200	\$67,200	100%
Wolfville	\$15,150	\$3,939	26%
Totals	\$351,450	\$174,330 confirmed	

The amount confirmed to date represents 49% of the total request.

Items of note:

- The customary division of the Library Funding Formula is 71% provincial / 26% municipal. Therefore, some municipalities have chosen only to contribute 26% of the requested additional amount.
- The additional funding from Middleton is conditional upon the Province providing additional funding.
- The additional funding from West Hants is conditional upon the AVRL Board maintaining existing service levels at the 2 branches in WHRM.

Given that the Provincial budget is status quo with no allocation for the previously-contributed “Bridge” funding (\$193,000 in 2025-26), these contributions will not be enough to maintain AVRL’s current level of operation throughout 2026-27.

Further, all of the contributions indicate that they are one-time commitments and at this time cannot be considered sustainable funding for 2027-28 and beyond.

4. Updates to AVRL’s 2026-27 Budget

The following are updates to the AVRL Board’s approved 2026-27 budget:

- **Same Page Postage Grant:** a total of \$138,146 has been approved for the Same Page consortium. The grant is split based on actual postage usage. Some of this revenue will be received in 2025-26 and some in 2026-27. For AVRL, this revenue is estimated at \$9,000 per fiscal year.
- **Summer Reading Challenge:** given the current status of the budget and timing of service changes, AVRL is planning for a reduced Summer Reading Challenge (online version using Beanstack). No contract staff will be hired for 2026, reducing wage costs by approximately \$25,000.

- **Indigenous Liaison position:** no viable candidates have been received to date. This position is still posted however given the timing, will remain vacant until a decision is made regarding service levels.

Accounting for these changes, the estimated 2026-27 deficit of \$625,000 is reduced to a range of \$560,000 - \$585,000.

After including the above confirmed municipal contributions, the deficit reduces to \$385,000 - \$410,000.

5. AVRL's Deficits vs Reserve Funds FY26 & FY27

AVRL's projected deficits for the current and next fiscal years are:

- Deficit FY26: \$254,000
- Deficit FY27: \$410,000

Total: \$664,000

AVRL's available reserve funds as of February 2026:

- Investia \$506,756.70
- RBC Business Bank Account \$112,524.73

Total \$619,281.43

This amount does not include the Evans bequest or other bequests and only includes the Board's unrestricted assets. It is assumed that the Board will treat the Evans fund separately and address the issue of donations and fundraising in April/May.

6. March 2026 Operating Reserve Withdrawals:

March 16, 2026: the AVRL Board passed an electronic resolution authorizing the CEO to withdraw funds from its investment accounts in order to maintain cash flow for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 fiscal years.

In order to address:

- The lack of a line of credit or overdraft on the operating account;
- The 2025-26 estimated deficit of \$254,000;
- The estimated deficit of \$103,000 for Q1 2026-27;
- Lumpy spending and revenues;

- Any severance payouts representing additional costs over and above the approved estimated budget;

As of March 31, 2026, the CEO has withdrawn:

- **\$112,524.73 from the RBC Business Bank Account**
- **\$200,000.00 from the unrestricted Investia account**

Cash flow will be reassessed monthly as the final data from 2025-26 is confirmed, and revenue for 2026-27 is received from municipal units.

7. Timeline for Service Changes, Intersection with Union obligations

Based on the information available, the AVRL does not have the means to continue operating throughout 2026-27 without expending all of its available reserves.

Therefore, in order to reach a sustainable financial state for 2026-27 and beyond, the AVRL Board will need to make decisions about service reductions that will take place within the 2026 calendar year; potentially as early as July 2026.

In anticipation of this reality, AVRL Management has taken the following steps with NSUPE Local 23:

- Tuesday, March 31, 2026: AVRL issued advance notice to NSUPE Local 23 of impending layoffs and invited collaboration on mitigation strategies.
 - Friday, April 10, 2026: AVRL Management met with the NSUPE Local 23 Executive and Business Agent to discuss mitigation strategies and processes around potential layoffs.
 - A subsequent meeting has been set for Friday April 17th to continue discussions.

Note that the AVRL is required to give a minimum of 45 days' layoff notice to employees. This notice period will need to be balanced with operational feasibility considerations such as:

- Communication to affected municipal units
- Communication to the public
- Operational transition functions: bumping, layoff, adjusting employee schedules, etc

These factors, and the timelines associated with them, will become clearer as the Board moves through its decision-making process.

8. Other Strategic Considerations

As part of its discussions around service reductions, staff recommend that the Board continue to discuss and make determinations regarding the following:

A) Public Communications Plan

Public engagement will continue to remain key in the coming months as library users react to changes in the services being delivered to their communities.

It is recommended that the AVRL Board continue to discuss ways to encourage public engagement after service decisions have been made.

AVRL has received positive feedback regarding the Nova Scotia libraries' government relations and public advocacy efforts to date.

- CCTH staff indicated to CORL that the advocacy efforts last year were key in not seeing a reduction to base funding.
- Feb 28, NDP has started a petition in support of public libraries:
<https://act.nsndp.ca/sign/action-for-libraries>

What advocacy and public engagement strategies would the Board like to take in the critical next year of this process?

B) Municipal Engagement

At the January 2026 meeting with municipal units, multiple mayors expressed willingness to attend joint meetings with AVRL and regional MLAs. This engagement opportunity remains open.

Similarly, the NSFMM has increased its attention to the issue of public library funding and has been in communication with AVRL for additional information in preparation for upcoming meetings.

What, if any, additional municipal engagement does the AVRL Board wish to take?

C) Fundraising

There would be political value in the AVRL undertaking a fundraising exercise in 2026, even if the results are not enough to prevent service changes. AVRL is a registered charity and is eligible to conduct a variety of fundraising activities, such as a 50/50 or a gala event.

Long-term fundraising beyond 2026 is an item that the Board will also need to discuss in more depth.

What would sustainable fundraising look like, and how would the Board accomplish this?

Board Reporting

Annapolis Valley Regional Library
For the period ended February 28, 2026



Prepared on
April 6, 2026

P&L w Budget Comparason

April 2025 - February 2026

	Actual	Budget	Remaining	% Remaining	Total
INCOME					
4010 Revenue - Lost Books	2,500.53		-2,500.53		
4020 Revenue - Province	2,012,800.00	2,115,800.00	103,000.00	4.87 %	
4030 Revenue - Municipal	702,900.00	702,900.00	0.00	0.00 %	
4100 Revenue - One Card Library Alliance	4,114.27		-4,114.27		
4105 Revenue - Printing	30,724.31	27,000.00	-3,724.31	-13.79 %	
4700 Revenue - Deferred Write down	90,938.71	49,155.00	-41,783.71	-85.00 %	
4701 Revenue - Book Sales	3,539.05		-3,539.05		
4702 Revenue - Donations	33,595.05	8,000.00	-25,595.05	-319.94 %	
4703 Revenue - Grants	2,995.00		-2,995.00		
4704 Revenue - Misc	18,707.68		-18,707.68		
4705 Revenue - Wages External Funding	7,683.78		-7,683.78		
4800 HST Rebate (OLD)	54,163.20	50,000.00	-4,163.20	-8.33 %	
4901 Revenue - Interest	16,913.29	40,000.00	23,086.71	57.72 %	
Total Income	2,981,574.87	2,992,855.00	11,280.13	0.38 %	
COST OF GOODS SOLD					
5000 COS - Books, Periodicals & related costs	275,085.37	340,000.00	64,914.63	19.09 %	
5020 Equipment Purchases		5,500.00	5,500.00	100.00 %	
5025 Furniture Purchases		3,000.00	3,000.00	100.00 %	
5026 Capital Purchases - Other	35,436.59	54,155.00	18,718.41	34.56 %	
Total Cost of Goods Sold	310,521.96	402,655.00	92,133.04	22.88 %	
GROSS PROFIT	2,671,052.91	2,590,200.00	-80,852.91	-3.12 %	
EXPENSES					
5030 Lost Book Replacement Expenses	81.67		-81.67		
6005 Advertising & Promotion	3,188.28	6,000.00	2,811.72	46.86 %	
6010 Bank Charges	1,576.21	2,500.00	923.79	36.95 %	
6015 Communication & Internet Expenses	6,269.17	5,500.00	-769.17	-13.98 %	

	Actual	Budget	Remaining	% Remaining	Total
6017 Computer Application & Service Costs	6,863.72		-6,863.72		
6020 Dues, Fees, & Memberships	174.00		-174.00		
6025 HST Rebate - Books (OLD)		45,000.00	45,000.00	100.00 %	
6040 Insurance	17,707.94	19,000.00	1,292.06	6.80 %	
6045 Leases - Equipment	334.63		-334.63		
6050 Miscellaneous Expenses	257.37	500.00	242.63	48.53 %	
6055 Office Expenses	31,008.11	35,000.00	3,991.89	11.41 %	
6060 Postage	24,175.55	30,000.00	5,824.45	19.41 %	
6065 Professional Fees	101,583.10	80,000.00	-21,583.10	-26.98 %	
6200 Program Costs	52,265.90	11,000.00	-41,265.90	-375.14 %	
6300 Rent	62,408.55	69,507.00	7,098.45	10.21 %	
6305 Repairs & Maintenance	2,003.65		-2,003.65		
6350 Service Contracts	66,591.48	97,795.00	31,203.52	31.91 %	
6399 Union Negotiation Expenses	2,215.25		-2,215.25		
6400 Salaries & Wages	2,177,622.70	2,388,695.00	211,072.30	8.84 %	
6450 Staff Moving Expenses	5,459.71		-5,459.71		
6600 Vehicle Expenses	22,121.41	22,000.00	-121.41	-0.55 %	
6650 Board Expenses	1,306.18	1,700.00	393.82	23.17 %	
6700 Staff Expenses	49,951.75	40,750.00	-9,201.75	-22.58 %	
Total Expenses	2,635,166.33	2,854,947.00	219,780.67	7.70 %	
NET OPERATING INCOME	35,886.58	-264,747.00	-300,633.58	113.56 %	
NET INCOME	\$35,886.58	\$ -264,747.00	\$ -300,633.58	113.56 %	

Deferred Revenue Report - Detailed

March 31, 2024-February 28, 2026

Item class	2600 Deferred Revenue
AR- Bequest (Evans Estate)	\$1,231,897.08
AR- General	\$564.80
AR-Innovation-Lab	\$0.00
AR- Peter Mansour Donation	\$168.77
AVRL-Adaptive Equipment	\$4,105.17
AVRL- BookBikes - Libracycle	\$0.00
AVRL- Bookclub in a Bag	\$2,422.33
AVRL- Bridge Funding	\$0.00
AVRL- Cancer Resources	\$734.27
AVRL- CFUW	\$3,835.23
AVRL- CPI Trainer	\$882.91
AVRL- CNet 150 Makers	\$689.95
AVRL- Curtis Chipman	\$11,072.99
AVRL- FLIEF	\$4,292.54
AVRL-Food Security Init	\$0.00
AVRL- General	\$1,023.10
AVRL-Grant-Tax	\$0.00
AVRL-LDF-Comm Consultation	\$0.00
AVRL-LDF-Comm with Library	\$0.00
AVRL-LDF-Sharing NS	\$1,352.64
AVRL-LDF-Staff Training	\$858.37
AVRL- Moving Through Grant	\$2,034.14
AVRL- Period Poverty	\$24,865.48
AVRL- SERAD	\$3,369.79
AVRL- Teen Zone	\$29,804.07
BE- Harry Potter	\$2,201.08
BE-Library Fund	\$4,080.81
BE- Outdoor Reading Room	\$334.34
BE- Programming	\$2,177.56
BR- Anonymous Funds	\$2,158.90
BR- Book Sales	\$294.71
BR- Expansion	\$605.07
BR-Friends-Fund	\$2,823.13
BR-Friends-Programming	\$91.74
BR-Roberta White	\$10,000.00
BR- Wellness	\$136.53
HA- Book Sales	\$18.00
HA- Donations	\$13.55
HA-Program Room	\$46.23
KE- Book Sales	\$1,331.69
KE- Computer Classes	\$2,418.64
KE- Valerie Goldin Donation	\$7,454.92
KI- Book Sales	\$1,011.42
KI- Canada Helps Building	\$2,078.43

Item class	2600 Deferred Revenue
KI- Canada Post	\$8,247.68
KI- General	\$53,621.08
KI-Grant-Tax	\$1,594.96
KI- Programming	\$160.65
LA- Book Sales	\$678.30
LA- General	\$0.00
LA- Literacy	\$61.67
MI- Book Sales	\$1,299.31
MI- Estate of C Harvey	\$1,357.75
MI- Estate of David Arthur Ritchie	\$86,905.43
MI-Friends-Programming	\$495.38
PW- Book Sales	\$488.20
PW-Friends-Donations	\$3,670.24
WI- Book Sales	\$1,835.16
WI- General	\$1,607.18
WI-Nordic Walking Poles	\$72.66
WO- eBikes	\$441.34
WO- General	\$7,331.99
WO-General-Donations	\$50.00
WO-Hammett Donations	\$3,971.48
WO-Innovation-Lab	\$9,035.54
WO-New Building	\$175,342.86
WO- NS Tech	\$42.96
	\$0.01
Total	\$1,721,562.21

AVRL Progress Report 2025-2028: April 2026

Achievement of these goals may be delayed due to the Library Funding Formula Review and its impact on operations.

Perspectives	#	Strategic Actions	KPIs	Initiatives	Status
	B1	Finalize and implement up-to-date Board / Governance Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Development Framework is approved by the Board and in place • Core suite of policies are approved and in place to support Board Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework brought to Board for September 2025 meeting • 3 policies brought forward for adoption and revision to September 2025 Board meeting • 2 policies brought forward for adoption and revision to November 2025 Board meeting • 1 position statement brought forward for adoption and revision to February 2026 Board meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework approved at September 2025 Board meeting • Sept/25: Code of Conduct, Contests, and Investment Policy approved • Nov/25: Intellectual Freedom and Computer Use policies approved • Feb/26: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Position Statement approved • Anticipated completion of core policy approvals: December 2027
	B2	Develop and deliver a change management plan, including a communications plan, staff training, etc., to introduce Policy Development Framework and approved core policies to staff and the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are able to confidently locate, understand and uphold library policies • Public are aware of and understand library policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 1: Sr Mgrs. complete Change Management training Sept 2025 • Part 2: Sr Mgrs. develop Plan for Dec 2025 • Part 3: all-staff implementation 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training module developed and reviewed by all Sr. Managers Aug/Sept 2025 • Draft change management plan in progress, Nov/25 • Draft substantively developed and on hold, Feb/26
	B3	Modernize roles & responsibilities for Friends of the Library relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and Friends are aligned in goals for communication process, fundraising projects, role of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends are included in government communications plan with National PR, will be asked for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nov 2025, Friends groups have been sent letter re: funding challenges/service impacts in 2026. Multiple groups leveraged their contacts within their communities to encourage more communications with MLAs. • No update Apr/26.
	B4	Establish collaborative working strategies (e.g. work groups, standing committees) to advance specific operational goals and support service delivery.	<p>Potential measures to determine success could include: number of staff participating in at least one working group; ability of working groups to make meaningful progress towards goals; staff demonstrate increase in skills; staff perception of working groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First attempts in process; work groups of Branch Supervisors to document current operating procedures as of March 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive Behaviour and Public Computer Use procedures launched December 2025 • Branch Procedures manual to be launched March 2026 • New working group Nov/25: 2SLGBTQIA+ • Testing and refining processes to determine functional needs.

Internal Business Processes	B5	Review, update, and document all business processes and records management practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented Administration and Financial procedures • Documented Branch Operations procedures • Documented Technology Services, Circulation procedures, Service Delivery procedures, etc. • Document HR procedures (recruitment, training, etc.) • Records management system in place to maintain accurate files • Business processes are posted in shared and easily accessible locations for the staff • Procedures are reviewed on an annual or as-needed basis by staff working groups, with changes recommended to senior management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branch Supervisor working groups 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branch procedures - computer use - incident management procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive Behaviour and Public Computer Use procedures launched December 2025 • Branch Procedures manual launched March 2026 • April 2026: the full suite of Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee documents has been reviewed and updated; will be implemented when operationally feasible.
	B6	Develop and deliver a Technology Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an equipment inventory • Establish an equipment replacement strategy & timeline • Identify an equipment maintenance plan • Library Board makes annual capital transfer to reserves to fully fund technology needs • Equipment is replaced on a regular schedule to avoid service disruptions, security risks, poor service quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment inventory in process • 51 public and staff computers being replaced in 2025 to bring all computers to under 5 years old and upgrade to Windows 11 	In progress Nov/25
	B7	Develop a cybersecurity plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AVRIL cyber security plan meets the standards for minimizing risk to the organization. • Staff are trained on Online Security Fundamentals • Staff are trained on the new cybersecurity plan, understand their roles and responsibilities, are able to follow security protocols and procedures. • Potential measure of preparedness could include: training for staff and periodic testing of knowledge and behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Security Fundamentals training will be made available to all staff fall/winter 2025-26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept/25: Online Security Fundamentals course completed by all staff • Oct/25: Identification of the Center for Internet Security Critical Security Controls (Basic Tier) as the framework for developing a plan that meets these KPIs • 2026 anticipated for other major components

	B8	<p>Deliver on the actions in the new Accessibility Plan including working with our town/village/county facilities partners to complete an audit of all facilities, and other items as per new Accessibility Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AVRl's accessibility work meets or exceeds the standards laid out by legislation and the AVRl's Accessibility Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with all 11 Municipalities and determine a) what work they are doing to meet the accessibility legislation requirements and b) their level of willingness to work together on making facility improvements • Apply for a Library Development Fund grant in late 2025 or the 2026 intake to fund an audit of all facilities • Identify priority action items and how the Library can work towards them independently or in partnership with Municipalities. 	Not started
	B9	<p>Identify a new organizational staffing model to meet current and future operational and service delivery requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Board has comprehensive data to use in making decisions in tandem with the Library Funding Formula and Strategic Plan goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing model that accounts for multiple funding scenarios: status quo funding/service levels, status quo funding/reduced service levels, moderate funding increase, significant funding increase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Step 1: Identify principles/priorities that drive the staffing model o Step 2: Scheduling exercise: draft models that determine the ideal and required staff levels at varying open hours o Step 3: Develop costing models that account for staffing resources at multiple funding scenarios and levels of service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to September 2025 Board meeting that details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 10 costed service models that account for multiple funding scenarios, using existing service model o Report includes identification of principles/priorities that drive the models o Step 2 in progress: Scheduling exercise to determine ideal staff levels • Nov/25, additional service models in development for consideration going into 2026-27 • Apr/26, Five draft operational scenarios prepared for AVRl Board based on Provincial/Municipal funding for 2026-27. To be refined based on identified Board priorities and values at April Board Meeting.

	B10	Implement the new staffing model as able and as funding permits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision and action items are aligned with the strategic plan and its goals for improving and/or increasing service. Achievement can be measured by examining pre and post-strategic plan service metrics, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Circulation statistics: physical, digital, holds queues, patron requests submitted vs filled o Membership statistics: number of unique users, frequency of use, physical vs digital use o Use of physical spaces: number of users per day/week/month, number of computer/wifi uses, use of in-branch spaces for reading, study, family time o Number of programs, change in attendance numbers at programs o Patron feedback: verbal, written, through surveys o Percentage of staff delivering programs 		To be implemented in tandem with funding decisions 2026-27
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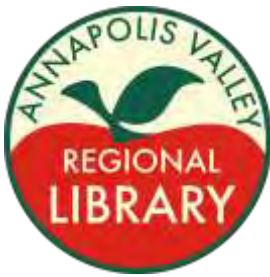
	L1	Develop and deliver training to support workplace safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased staff engagement and morale • Increased staff skill set • AVRL uses a variety of methods to measure success of the training and performance management strategies, e.g. Staff self-reporting, customer feedback, observed behavior, increased quality of performance • Reduction in WCB claims and injury reports 		Planned for 2026
	L2	Develop and implement a rigorous Performance Management strategy			Planned for 2026-27
	L3	Encourage staff engagement and support skills development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025: development of onboarding program; storytime training; cybersecurity fundamentals; DiSC profile assessments 	In progress
	L4	Identify and develop a single communications platform for all staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff consistently use a single digital access point for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Shared file access 	Assessment of current options under way	In progress

Learning & Growth	L5	Adopt a change management approach to promote change adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff understand the life cycle of programs, services, and processes and know what to expect during rollout of new initiatives or changes to operations • Staff find it easier to adopt changes or new developments, as measured through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Staff self-reporting o Decreased conflict within the organization o Shorter implementation time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sr Mgrs have completed change management training; to develop plan for the staff body by the end of 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training module developed and reviewed by all Sr. Managers Aug/Sept 2025 • Draft change management plan in progress, Nov/25 • Draft substantively developed and on hold, Feb/26
	L6	Develop and deliver diversity and cultural sensitivity training to promote a welcoming and inclusive workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, behavior, interpersonal relationships as demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increase in incorporating principles of diversity into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programming, - partnerships, - marketing, and - customer service - interpersonal relationships between staff: based on staff reporting, changes or reductions in the number and types of interpersonal problems to be resolved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intent to establish staff working group/planning committee Fall 2025; recruitment under way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In progress; • New working group Nov/25: 2SLGBTQIA+ • Feb/26: Diversity, equity, and inclusion training module launched for all staff
	L7	Create opportunities to support each other through coaching and mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, behavior, interpersonal relationships as demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increased team cohesion o Increased skill/quality in job performance o Decreased feelings of isolation o Assessment of the program using participant feedback o Assessment of whether the program is impacting rates of retention or successful career development at AVRIL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting an internal mentorship program to ensure all staff have the opportunity to develop their career through the development of interpersonal relationships for the sharing of information and personal support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In progress; first mentorship organized and completed Fall 2025
	L8	Leading with emotional intelligence training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, behavior, interpersonal relationships as demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increased ability to solve problems without managerial support o Increase in quality of solutions found o Increased team cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial course for staff made available in Learning Management System Fall 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In progress

	L9	Develop and deliver a Staff Recognition Program to acknowledge and reward milestones and accomplishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AVRIL uses a variety of methods to measure success of the staff recognition program, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o staff self-reporting, morale and engagement reporting pre and post-recognition program o increased participation in organizational initiatives o increased sense of inclusion 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb/26: First work milestone recognition gift for 30 years of service was well received. Staff member reported feeling seen, heard, supported, and cared for.
	C1	Develop a new Programming Framework for Adults, Teens, and Children that aligns with community demand and the Library's mission to build strong communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework is complete • Priorities, resources, and partners are identified • Action plan is complete • Training for staff is developed and implemented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, behavior, skills as demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observed delivery of programs - Participant feedback - Other measures? • Changes/increase in number and types of programs delivered sustainably 		Planned for early 2027 pending funding formula and service model decisions in 2026
	C2	Identify and take action to restore select core programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of programs year over year • How many different types of programs are being offered YOY • Evaluation of reliability/consistency of programs • Attendance metrics • Qualitative reporting from program attendees re: quality • Measures of sustainability of program delivery increase (eg multiple staff trained on the same program to prevent service disruption, staffing model permits increase from X to Y number of programs, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely TBD in conjunction with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) new Library Funding Formula; 2) internal training and capacity-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently undertaking staff training pilot to restore Storytime at more AVRIL branches (2025-26) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nov/25 training completed at Port Williams, Windsor, Hantsport • Jan/26 training completed at Kingston

Customers and Stakeholders	C3	Leverage change management principles to encourage staff adoption of the Programming Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff understand the life cycle of programs, services, and processes and know what to expect during rollout of new initiatives or changes to operations • Staff find it easier to adopt changes or new developments, as measured through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Staff self-reporting o Decreased conflict within the organization • Shorter implementation time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sr Mgrs have completed change management training; to develop plan for the staff body by the end of 2025 	In progress
	C4	Develop and implement Partnership Framework to expand our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Policy is approved by the Board • Partnership Framework is complete • AVRIL priorities and resources are identified • Potential partners and/or opportunities are identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy to be developed as part of the policy review currently underway, expected in 2026 	Policy review in progress
	C5	Develop and implement Volunteer Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Policy is approved by the Board • Volunteer Operational Framework is complete • Volunteer Management Program is complete • Responsibility for the Framework and oversight of the volunteers is delegated as appropriate • Volunteers are recruited and begin contributing to library services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy to be developed as part of the policy review currently underway, expected in 2026 	Policy review in progress
	C6	Seek out and act on opportunities for partner organizations to deliver services that we do not have capacity/skill to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking opportunities are planned and delegated to appropriate staff members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Organizational priorities are clearly understood by delegated staff o Staff engaged in networking opportunities follow appropriate procedures for partnership development o Networking opportunities yield positive ideas for partnership (including ideas that aren't able to be pursued, but build connections and relationships with community organizations) • Organization-wide partnerships yield service increases to AVRIL service area • Internal database of current and potential partners is created and kept current with contact information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall/Winter 2025-26: a new networking opportunity allowed AVRIL to distribute existing Period Poverty supplies in Kings Transit Authority buses and depot. This initiative is supported by a Provincial grant (no end date for use of funds). 	Not formally started.

Financial Stewardship	F1	No specific strategic goals currently set; section included as placeholder			
	F2				
	F3				
	F4				
	F5				



Report to Board

To: AVRL Board
From: Julia Merritt
Date: April 16, 2026
Re: AVRL Board Response to March 2026 Staff Survey

This report is submitted for decision.

Summary of Issue

Prior to any restructuring decisions undertaken by the AVRL Board, an anonymous survey was sent to all AVRL staff to collect their input on how AVRL can best move through the upcoming period of change. The results indicate that additional communication from the Board directly to staff could be beneficial in maintaining relationships.

Board Response

Incorporating ongoing communications to staff during the restructuring period may be beneficial.

Potential responses could include:

- Formal response letter to all staff
- Formal letter to union requesting additional insight and/or perspectives
- Attending a virtual Staff Town Hall to be available to answer questions

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend that the AVRL Board engage in one or more communication initiatives to connect with AVRL staff.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Antigonish Town and County Library and New Glasgow Public Library will be closing Sundays
Beginning in April

March 17, 2026

(Pictou and Antigonish Counties) In order to cope with static provincial grant funding and the uncertainty over bridge funding the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library has made the decision to close the Antigonish Library and the New Glasgow Library on Sundays, beginning in April.

“We regret this decision, but have no choice. Demand is increasing on our public library services and programs and we will undoubtedly see more activity due to the cuts in other provincial grants and programs. We are stretched thin.” explains Vice Chair Nicole LeBlanc. Antigonish and New Glasgow libraries are the two branches in the region open on Sundays, from 2-5pm. While busy, Sundays are the slowest day of the week and use of public meeting spaces lowest. Eric Stackhouse, Chief Librarian, points out, “It will impact the many users who need access to the internet and technology and those in need of a free public space for shelter, study, or social time. These libraries should be open 7 days a week, people want that, but it isn’t possible in these fiscal conditions.”

The Provincial Government did not cut the core library grant received from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage. It remains at the same level for a 7th year in a row. The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board requested that emergency funding, received for the last 3 years to help fund minimum wage increases and inflation, be included with the core library grant. It was not included. This leaves the Board with a reduction of \$143,600 in provincial income from last fiscal year. At the same time the Minimum Wage is increasing again April 1st and inflation continues. The Board will be looking for help from its users in April as it begins fundraising in earnest.

- 30 -

For further information, please contact Eric Stackhouse at (902) 331-0402 or estackhouse@parl.ns.ca.



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Budget constraints could lead to Annapolis Valley Regional Library service cuts

Projected \$500,000 deficit for coming year could deplete remaining reserves

By **Kirk Starratt**

Published Apr 06, 2026 Last updated 3 days ago 6 minute read



Annapolis Valley Regional Library Berwick branch supervisor Barbara Lipp, left, and Annapolis Valley Regional Library CEO Julia Merritt at the Berwick Library. Merritt says that if the regional library doesn't

receive sustainable funding, cuts to services will be inevitable. PHOTO BY KIRK STARRATT /Postmedia

The Annapolis Valley Regional Library has fewer resources amid increasing demand for its services.

CEO Julia Merritt said the funding situation could result in reducing staff, operating hours, services, and perhaps having to close branches.

She said provincial library funding is governed by the Library Funding Formula. The formula and funding amount was set in the fiscal year 2019-20 and was intended to cover the period until March 31, 2025.

Prior to the end of that period, the provincial government initiated a review of the funding formula. The resulting recommendations were not implemented in 2025-26 or 2026-27.

Merritt said that while libraries didn't see a cut to existing funding, the base level of provincial support has remained unchanged since 2019-20. For the past three years, the provincial government provided bridge or top-up funding to address "ongoing realities of inflation and cost increases."

For the Annapolis Valley, the bridge funding amounted to about \$200,000 a year.

However, that funding was not included in the province's 2026-27 budget.

“The core funding was not cut, but we have been receiving extra funding for the last three years, and that has not been included,” Merritt said. “It’s hard, because the province can say that there has not been a cut, however, we are not getting what we have gotten at the same time.”

She said the bridge funding represented about seven per cent of the Annapolis Valley’s total funding. It is a significant loss, especially considering the compounded pressures of inflation since 2019, minimum wage increases, and other cost spikes. Merritt said this puts the regional library in a “sticky situation.”

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1



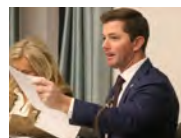
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Since 2009, the regional library's budget has increased by 10 per cent, while the Bank of Canada estimates inflation has increased by 43 per cent during the same period.

To mitigate ongoing budget limitations, the regional library has reduced staff by 25 per cent between 2015 and 2024. The bookmobile service was eliminated in 2021, and as of 2024, there has been a 50 per cent reduction in programming and the elimination of partnerships.

Deficit position

In January, the library requested a 50 per cent funding increase from its municipal partners. Municipalities provide about 26 per cent of its core funding.

In a March 25 interview, Merritt said some municipalities have indicated they would provide a funding increase, although with the exception of West Hants and Annapolis Royal, not the full 50 per cent.

4



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5



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the library at that increased rate without additional provincial support.”

For the 2025-26 fiscal year, the regional library has a forecasted budget deficit of about \$254,000. Merritt said the increase to minimum wage alone represented an increase of more than \$100,000. For the two previous fiscal years, they also had budget deficits but made internal reductions such as not filling job positions when employees retired to cover the difference.

“Now we’re at Year 3, and those efficiencies just don’t exist anymore,” Merritt said.

There aren’t any more avenues to reduce costs without laying off staff, closing branches, or gutting the collections budget, “which is pretty core to what people are expecting out of the libraries.”

For the 2026-27 fiscal year, assuming there won’t be any provincial bridge funding, there is a projected deficit of more than \$528,000,

with expenses forecasted at more than \$3 million.

The library had to use reserve funds to cover the deficit for 2025-26, and may have to completely deplete the remaining reserves, about \$400,000, to get through the 2026-27 fiscal year.

Merritt said the regional library board is going to meet in the spring to review all the information around funding the municipalities and the province are willing to provide. Board members will look at the library's current level of service versus the deficit, "and will be making some decisions to reduce that deficit and bring the budget back into a sustainable place."

She said municipalities that have library branches are responsible for the buildings, so the costs that come out of the library budget are mainly staffing, collections, and internal operations.

This means staffing and collections are the main areas that could be cut to achieve cost savings. If the board must reduce staffing, it will have to reduce branch hours and services to the public that the staff provide.

Merritt said it has already had to say no to some partnerships, to delivering

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programming, to working with government to deliver services, or helping government agencies get their messaging out and helping Nova Scotians access services.

“There’s lots of things that we’ve already had to say no to, and we’ll have to say no to even more in the future,” Merritt said.

Perhaps the biggest thing the public would notice is reduced access to branches or locations and reduced collections.

Increasing demand

She said a “classic correlation” that can be tracked historically across the country is that when the economy gets worse, library use goes up.

In terms of people checking out books, the Annapolis Valley Regional Library’s circulation has increased by 30 per cent over the last 15 years while the Annapolis Valley’s population has grown by about 10 per cent.

This doesn’t take into consideration increased public computer use, walk-in traffic, program engagement, partnerships, information requests, help with technology, or any other metrics for services provided.

Actor Ashton Kutcher takes note of Glace Bay man's obituary

SaltWire

by Taboola

“There is an increasing number of ways that people want to use their library and are using their library, especially when there’s economic uncertainty or downturn and people are facing budgetary pressures in their households,” Merritt said.

Accessing the internet has become a necessity. This presents challenges for many people, especially low-income earners. Those who live in rural or remote areas face so-called “last mile” access challenges and a lack of high-speed internet service.

When residents encounter these challenges or need help navigating websites, filling out online government forms, or need access to a printer, they turn to public libraries.

Improving quality of life

Merritt said what the Annapolis Valley stands to lose if there isn’t a reliable public library network in the future is “in some ways beyond measuring.” The library is one of – if not the last – fully free indoor public spaces.

“It is a free, welcoming space for everybody. It doesn’t matter who you are or why you need to come. You’re welcome here,” she said.

The library is important to many people in terms of developing a sense of community

and belonging. Merritt said the value of having that connection point between people in an era when people are increasingly feeling isolated, lonely, and disconnected “can’t be overstated.” That’s without taking the more than 80 resources and services the regional library offers into consideration.

She said libraries have always been about a person’s desire to improve their quality of life or their hope for a better future. Public libraries of today originated from mechanics institutes, where working-class people would pay memberships to access books so they could learn and make their lives better.

“I think that’s the key,” Merritt said. “They wanted to make their lives better, and that’s the premise that underlies everything a library is, even today.”

She said libraries represent community-building and connections, anti-poverty initiatives, and lifelong learning all wrapped up in a “very efficient package.”

Merritt encourages anyone who is concerned about potential cuts to library services to connect with MLAs and municipal councils to share their library experiences and stories and express why sustainable funding for libraries is an important priority.



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CELEBRATION!

NSUPE WELCOME'S CUMBERLAND PUBLIC LIBRARIES! LOCAL 24!!!!



NSUPE is happy to welcome library workers at the Cumberland Public Libraries as our new local 24. They join library workers from Halifax Public Library (HPL) and Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL).

The key moment in the organizing campaign came when the provincial government announced budget cuts across the province. Operational funding for public libraries has not increased since 2020, and emergency funding that was given to library boards over the past few years was not renewed in the recent budget. To address this shortfall, workers decided to unionize.

"I believe in sending a unified message to the government of Nova Scotia and that our libraries are worth more than what our elected officials see on a balance sheet," said Leslie Allen, one of the workplace organizers. "By unifying with workers from our partner organizations in HPL and AVRL, under the NSUPE banner, we can better represent our patrons, communities, and library staff to the province and advocate for a better future for all."

NSUPE President, Christina Covert, welcomed the new members of Local 24.

"Your decision to unionize and come together with NSUPE strengthens our collective voice and our shared commitment to fairness, respect, and dignity in the workplace. I look forward to working with you, not just within your workplace, but to strengthen libraries across Nova Scotia."

NSUPE represents over 400 library workers at Halifax Public Library, Annapolis Valley Regional Library, and now Cumberland Public Libraries. If you are a library worker in Nova Scotia and want to join the movement to defend public libraries, click [here](#) to contact a union organizer.