

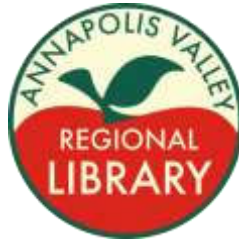
## **Annapolis Valley Regional Library**

**Thursday, June 18, 2026**

**6:30 p.m. – 7:30p.m.**

### **Agenda**

1. Call to order
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting
  - 3.1 Minutes of the May 25, 2026 Meeting
4. Guests/Presentations:
5. Correspondence and Communications
  - 5.1 Received:
    - 5.1.1 June 02/26 Hearn to Minister Lohr
    - 5.1.2 June 3/26 CORL to Minister Ritcey
    - 5.1.3 June 03/26 Minister Ritcey to J. Ness
    - 5.1.4 June 08/26 NSFm to AVRL
    - 5.1.5 June 08/26 Padovani to Minister Ritcey
    - 5.1.6 June 10/26 Twohig to Minister Ritcey
  - 5.2 Sent:
    - 5.2.1 May 28/26 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: none since May 25<sup>th</sup> meeting
    - 7.3.2 Income Statement: in progress based on budget adjustments
    - 7.3.3 Deferred Revenue report: in progress based on budget adjustments
    - 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: all updates contained in other reports
  - 8.2 Statistical Reports: update not available due to closure
9. New Business
10. Announcements from Board Members
11. Nova Scotia Libraries News and Updates
  - 11.1 June 11/26 The Pictou Advocate



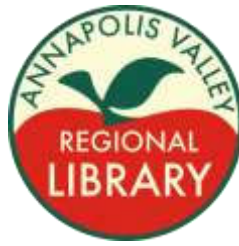
12. Next meetings:

Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm

Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm

13. In camera: labour relations and contract updates

14. Adjournment



## **Annapolis Valley Regional Library**

### **Extra Board Meeting**

**Monday, May 26, 2026**

**5:30 pm – 7:00 pm, VIRTUAL**

**Minutes (DRAFT)**

**PRESENT:** Jill Cox, Samantha Hamilton, Emily Lutz, Adele MacDonald, Chrystal Remme, Kari-Ann Parsons-Saltzman, Ty Walsh

**STAFF:** Julia Merritt (CEO)

**PRESENTERS:**

**REGRETS:**

1. Call to order  
J. Ness called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

**MOTION:** To approve the Agenda as presented.

**MOVED BY:** Adele MacDonald                      **SECONDED BY:** Chrystal Remme

**CARRIED**

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 Minutes of the April 16, 2026 Regular Meeting

- 3.2 Minutes of the April 23, 2026 Meeting; the continuation of the April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting

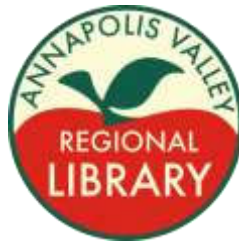
**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Regular meeting and the minutes from its continuance on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026.

**MOVED BY:** Jill Cox                      **SECONDED BY:** Kari-Ann Parsons-Saltzman

**CARRIED**

4. Guests/Presentations: none

5. Correspondence and Communications: none



6. Business Arising from the Previous Meeting: none not otherwise addressed.

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 – March 31, 2026

7.3.3 Deferred Revenue report April 1, 2025 – March 31 2026

7.3.4 Investment report: Investia Statement April 27, 2026

7.3.5 Investment Subcommittee report: none

**MOTION: To receive the committee reports as presented.**

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

**CARRIED**

8. Report from the Chief Executive Officer: none not otherwise addressed.

9. New Business: none

10. In camera:

10.1 Ratification of AVRL Restructuring Plan

10.2 Restructuring Communications Package with Rachel Cunningham, Senior Consultant,  
National Public Relations

**MOTION: To go in camera at 6:00pm**

**MOVED BY: Jill Cox SECONDED BY: Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman**

**CARRIED**

**MOTION: To go out of camera at 7:01pm**

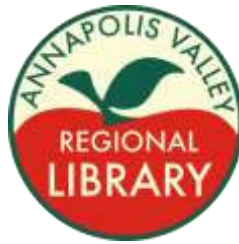
**MOVED BY: Adele MacDonald SECONDED BY: Ty Walsh**

**CARRIED**

**MOTION: That the AVRL Board approve the ratification of the restructuring plan as discussed in camera.**

**MOVED BY: Chrystal Remme SECONDED BY: Adele MacDonald**

**CARRIED**



11. Announcements from Board Members: none

12. Nova Scotia Libraries News and Updates: none

13. Next meetings:

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

Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm

Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026, In-person, 5:30pm

14. Adjournment

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 7:10pm**

**MOVED BY: Karie-Ann Parsons-Saltzman**

**CARRIED**

Genevieve Allen Hearn  
12 Miller Avenue  
Kentville, NS B4N 2S1

June 2, 2026

Honourable John Lohr  
MLA, Kings North  
347 Main Street  
Kentville, NS B4N 2M9

Dear Honourable John Lohr,

I am writing regarding the recent announcement of the closure of the Kentville Library.

While the decision to close the Kentville Library was ultimately made by the Annapolis Valley Regional Library Board, it is clear that this decision stems from years of funding pressures facing AVR. Over the past year in particular, AVR repeatedly and publicly communicated that difficult decisions would become unavoidable if the provincial funding formula remained unchanged.

For that reason, I was surprised to see statements from provincial representatives expressing shock and disappointment at the closure. If AVR's warnings were heard, then this outcome should not have come as a surprise. If those warnings were not heard, that raises equally concerning questions. Either way, the closure of one of the region's most heavily used libraries suggests a disconnect between the challenges being communicated by our library system and the response from the Province.

Libraries are among the most important "third places" in our communities - spaces outside of home and work where people can gather and connect. At a time when loneliness and social isolation are increasingly recognized as significant public health concerns, these spaces are more important than ever.

When third places disappear, the spaces left for gathering are often transactional. While I deeply value our local businesses, sitting at a table reserved for paying customers is fundamentally different from visiting a public library. Libraries are one of the few remaining public spaces where everyone is welcome, regardless of age, income, background, or circumstance. They are also places where community groups, such as the Kentville Chess Club, can run their programming. When a library dies, so too does this community programming.

This decision is particularly difficult to reconcile with Kentville's role as a regional service centre. Provincial and regional planning efforts consistently identify Kentville as a hub for services and community housing. We are working to create a more inclusive and accessible community by increasing housing options and supporting people through periods of transition. Yet at the same time, we are losing one of the very places where residents can access the internet, apply for jobs, print resumes, attend free community programs, and connect with supports. These objectives seem fundamentally at odds with one another.

I have heard repeated references to the Province providing 71% of library funding, but 71% of a budget established years ago is very different from 71% of a budget that reflects today's realities. The more important question is whether provincial funding of 71% has kept pace with the actual cost of operating a modern library system.

The closure of the Kentville Library is not simply a local issue. It is a reflection of broader questions about the kind of communities we are trying to build in Nova Scotia and the public services we value enough to sustain. Elected officials play a critical role in determining funding priorities and advocating for the services and institutions that strengthen our communities. If public libraries are not considered a priority, then I believe Nova Scotians deserve a transparent conversation about where those priorities lie.

Our community is resilient, and I know our residents are prepared to work hard to find solutions. What we need is strong leadership. I respectfully ask that you work with AVRL, your colleagues in government, and municipal partners to identify a path forward that preserves library services in Kentville.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Genevieve Allen Hearn".

Genevieve Allen Hearn

CC'd:

Honourable Tim Houston;  
Honourable Dave Ritcey;  
Members of Kentville Town Council;  
CAO Chris McNeill;  
Councillor Emily Lutz;  
Mayor Dave Corkum

## **CORL – Council of Regional Librarians**

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**June 3, 2026**

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

Dear Minister Ritcey,

I am writing to urge the Government of Nova Scotia to take immediate action to address the growing funding crisis facing public libraries across our province.

Nova Scotia's regional libraries are currently facing an estimated funding gap of \$12.78 million. This estimate is based on research completed as part of the department led 2024 Library Funding Review and reflects the impact of inflation over the past two years. Core provincial funding has remained unchanged since 2020, despite years of inflation and steadily rising operational costs. While temporary bridge funding has helped delay the most serious impacts, it has not resolved the underlying issue.

Library regions have worked diligently to manage these pressures responsibly. They have expanded fundraising efforts, coordinated services, shared resources across regions, reduced staffing and service hours, cut programs and collections, postponed maintenance and capital investments, and eliminated expenses wherever possible. These measures have been taken even as libraries across Nova Scotia continue to experience year-over-year growth in visits, circulation, and program attendance.

The strain on library systems is now becoming unsustainable. Reduced staffing levels are contributing to safety concerns, staff burnout, and a diminished capacity to respond to growing community needs. Stagnant wages and limited operational support are also contributing to staff turnover, further reducing the ability of libraries to develop and sustain valuable programs and services.

On June 1, 2026, the Annapolis Valley Regional Library announced that, effective July 20, 2026, it will close five of its eleven branches. Without meaningful provincial investment, other library regions may be forced to make similar decisions within the next one to three years. The consequences of these reductions will extend far beyond library walls and will be felt throughout communities across Nova Scotia.

In difficult times, Nova Scotians rely on public libraries more, not less. Libraries meet people where they are and provide essential services to residents who are often underserved elsewhere. Public libraries provide:

- Seniors with opportunities for social connection and support to remain active and independent within their communities.

- Low-income Nova Scotians with access to computers, internet, printers, and assistance completing taxes, government forms, job applications, and other essential tasks.
- Children and teens with safe after-school spaces, literacy support, and educational programming.
- Newcomers with welcoming community spaces that support integration and belonging.
- Community groups and volunteers with accessible meeting spaces.
- Entrepreneurs and small business owners with places to work, meet, and access information and services.

Every service reduction or branch closure has a ripple effect throughout the community. When a library branch closes, communities often lose one of their last free and inclusive public gathering spaces. In many smaller communities, libraries are the heart of civic life. Their loss deepens social isolation, widens the digital divide, and weakens the social connections that contribute directly to community wellbeing and public safety.

The Mass Casualty Commission's report, *Turning the Tide Together*, emphasizes the importance of strong social infrastructure, trusted local relationships, and connected communities in supporting resilience and public safety. Public libraries are uniquely positioned to help provide exactly these conditions.

For a relatively modest investment, the Government of Nova Scotia can preserve and strengthen a province-wide network that delivers tremendous social and economic value. Public libraries support digital access to government services, workforce readiness, entrepreneurship, newcomer integration, health navigation, mental health, and healthy aging. They also serve as an efficient and trusted distribution network for public programs and services.

This is not simply an investment in libraries. It is an investment in stronger, safer, healthier, and more connected communities across Nova Scotia.

To ensure standards in service delivery across all regions and the long-term sustainability of library services, The Council of Regional Librarians requests an increase to the core provincial operating grant of \$12.78 million, with future funding levels subject to annual indexation to account for inflationary pressures and rising operating costs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Erin Comeau, Chair  
Council of Regional Librarians

CC: Premier Tim Houston  
Christopher Shore, Deputy Minister, CCTH  
Sara Halliday, Associate Deputy Minister, CCTH  
Stephanie Smith, Executive Director, Libraries & Museums  
Lynn Somers, Director, NSPL  
Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities



**Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage  
Office of the Minister**

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1741 Brunswick Street, PO Box 456, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2R5 • Telephone 902-424-4889 • [novascotia.ca](http://novascotia.ca)

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June 3, 2026

Janet Ness  
Annapolis Valley Regional Library  
236 Commercial Street  
Berwick, NS B0P 1E0

Dear Janet Ness:

In response to the Annapolis Valley Regional Library's (AVRL) announcement to close 5 branch libraries due to fiscal challenges, I am hopeful that you could be available for a meeting next week.

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for the AVRL board, staff and impacted communities. CCTH values libraries and our relationship to regional library boards is important to us. A meeting provides us with a means to better understand your challenges and potential shared solutions.

If this is agreeable to you, please reach out to my Administrative Co-ordinator, Renata MacDonald at [Renata.MacDonald2@novascotia.ca](mailto:Renata.MacDonald2@novascotia.ca) / 902-424-4889.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Ritcey", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dave Ritcey  
Minister  
Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage



NOVA SCOTIA  
FEDERATION OF  
MUNICIPALITIES

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1809 Barrington Street Suite #1500 Halifax NS B3J 3K8 Tel: (902)423-8331 E-mail: info@nsfm.ca

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June 8, 2026

Julia Merritt  
Chief Executive Officer  
Annapolis Valley Regional Library  
236 Commercial St, PO Box 510  
Berwick NS B0P 1E0

**RE: Annapolis Valley Regional Library Service Changes and Restructuring  
Delivered via email**

Dear Julia,

Thank you for sending the letter and for outlining the difficult changes facing the Annapolis Valley Regional Library.

NSFM is concerned that funding pressures have led to service reductions of this scale, particularly given the role public libraries play in supporting literacy, digital access, reliable information, and community connection across the region. We recognize that these decisions were not made lightly and that the impacts will be felt by residents, staff, municipalities, and the broader community.

NSFM is continuing to work on the public library funding file. We will also share your letter with the NSFM Board at an upcoming Board meeting.

Thank you again for keeping us informed.

Kind Regards,

Juanita Spencer  
Chief Executive Officer  
Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

June 8, 2026

The Honourable David Ritcey  
Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage  
PO Box 456, STN Central  
Halifax, NS B3J 2R5

Dear Minister,

The ongoing lack of adequate government funding for our libraries speaks volumes about the priorities of this government. As libraries close, what are you telling communities that they no longer require?

- hubs that provide digital access to needed government and employment services
- learning centres in a region of the province with a shocking rate of illiteracy
- gathering places in a time of increasing social isolation
- one of the few remaining true "third spaces" available to everyone, regardless of age, income, or background

In an era of increasing isolation and division, libraries strengthen the social fabric that holds our communities together. There is no other public space that serves such a broad cross-section of society. If we truly believe in literacy, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and strong communities, then funding priorities should reflect those values.

*"The issue is not that the province has run out of fiscal room.  
The problem is how the government chooses to respond."*  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Nova Scotia.

It is disingenuous to claim there have been no funding cuts to library services when rising operating costs have not been met with corresponding increases in funding. When wages, utilities, materials, and programming costs continue to rise while funding remains stagnant, the result is effectively a cut. The impact is felt through reduced services, increased pressure on staff, and diminished capacity to meet community needs.

Libraries and their patrons, your constituents, have been sounding the cry for a decade. Library boards and staff have been holding the system together despite the bleeding. It was unsustainable and you knew. Or were you not listening? To suggest that the fault for library closures lies with the folks who were applying bandages to stop the bleeding while the lack of government funding chopped off their limbs is beyond the pale.

The overwhelming public response in support of our libraries should send you a clear message. Communities understand the value of libraries. The question is whether this government does as well.

Sincerely,  
Karen Padovani

cc: Premier Tim Houston  
Honourable John Lohr, Minister of Finance and MLA Kings North

**Karen Padovani · 15 MacKinnon Court, Kentville NS · [slater.padovani@eastlink.ca](mailto:slater.padovani@eastlink.ca)**

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Susan Twohig** <[suetwohig@proton.me](mailto:suetwohig@proton.me)>

Date: Wed, Jun 10, 2026 at 2:10 PM

Subject: Funding Public Libraries

To: [MIN\\_CCTH@novascotia.ca](mailto:MIN_CCTH@novascotia.ca) <[MIN\\_CCTH@novascotia.ca](mailto:MIN_CCTH@novascotia.ca)>, John Lohr <[johnlohrmla@gmail.com](mailto:johnlohrmla@gmail.com)>, [premier@novascotia.ca](mailto:premier@novascotia.ca) <[premier@novascotia.ca](mailto:premier@novascotia.ca)>

Cc: Julia Merritt <[administration@valleylibrary.ca](mailto:administration@valleylibrary.ca)>, Mayor & Council Town of Kentville <[CouncilandMayor@kentville.ca](mailto:CouncilandMayor@kentville.ca)>, Mayor County of Kings <[mayor.corkum@countyofkings.ca](mailto:mayor.corkum@countyofkings.ca)>, Mayor Zebian <[azebian@kentville.ca](mailto:azebian@kentville.ca)>

TO:

Hon, David Ritcey, Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism & Heritage

Hon. John Lohr, MLA - Kings North

Hon. Tim Houston, Premier, Province of Nova Scotia

Our public libraries are crucial spaces throughout the entire Province and none of them should be closed. It is the Provincial Government who should maintain its share of funding in keeping with inflation. Libraries are for much more than loaning books, but I am sure you are aware of the many services they provide, such as helping seniors and those who do not have computers complete government forms and file Income tax returns. They are public spaces where functions occur, such as distribution of COVID test kits on behalf of the Dept. of Health a few years ago. I understand a report regarding our Library system was carried out several years ago and am asking you where I might be able to access its recommendations.

Also I have heard that the Provincial Government should be sending representatives to serve on the various Regional Library Boards in order to keep the Government up to date on all the issues. Please let me know if this is accurate information, as I realize there is misinformation circulating on social media. I checked the AVRLB website and saw that there are representatives from the Municipal Units, but none from the Province.

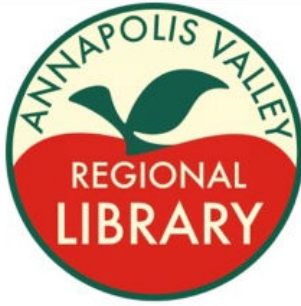
Respectfully, Susan Forcey Twohig, resident of Kings North  
902-678-8202

cc:

Julia Merritt, CEO - AVRLB

Mayor Andrew Zebian, Town of Kentville, and Council

Mayor David Corkum, Municipality of the County of Kings



## 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

May 28, 2026

Dear Minister Ritcey,

On behalf of the Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL) Board, I am writing to inform you that due to the lack of sustainable operating funding, the AVRL is no longer able to maintain its present level of service.

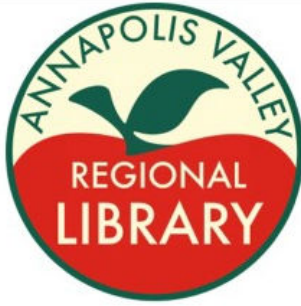
AVRL has come to the very difficult decision that, effective July 20, 2026, the following five AVRL branches will close, resulting in multiple staff layoffs and broader organizational restructuring across the library system:

1. Hantsport
2. Kentville
3. Lawrencetown
4. Middleton
5. Port Williams

We are deeply concerned about the impact this will have on the affected employees and the communities they serve. We plan on communicating this to library staff, municipalities, and the public on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

In order to complete the process of restructuring, and to support our staff through this initial transition, all AVRL locations will be closed from June 1 - 14, 2026.

Regular service at all locations will resume as of Monday, June 15, 2026 until the effective closure date of July 20th. On July 20th, the remaining 6 library branch locations will reopen with new, standardized hours. The remaining locations will be:



## Annapolis Valley Regional Library

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[www.valleylibrary.ca](http://www.valleylibrary.ca) email: [administration@valleylibrary.ca](mailto:administration@valleylibrary.ca)

1. Windsor
2. Wolfville
3. Berwick
4. Kingston
5. Bridgetown
6. Annapolis Royal

Minister, we must be direct: these unprecedented branch closures and service reductions were preventable. We have been transparent with your office about the potential consequences as a result of no increase to funding contributions and unfortunately we are at a very difficult decision point. We understand that the government has had to make some difficult choices about spending and priorities and we are disappointed that the future of libraries was not prioritized. Nova Scotia's public libraries have been engaged in ongoing discussions with CCTH including through the 2024 Library Funding Formula Review conducted by your department, which provided updated and fully costed funding recommendations.

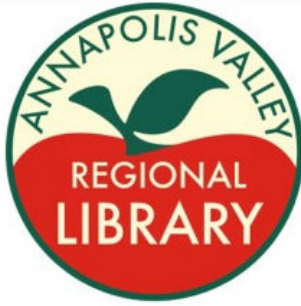
In 2026-27, the AVRL faced a preliminary deficit of \$625,000 including wage adjustments.

In preparation for the 2026–27 fiscal year, AVRL made separate and individual requests to the AVRL's partnering municipalities for an increase to their funding contributions. All eight funding municipalities committed additional funds for 2026-27 and the AVRL is deeply grateful for this commitment to library service. These contributions, taken together with additional internal reductions, have reduced the AVRL's 2026-27 deficit to \$322,600.

However, without sustainable increases in funding to the Library Funding Formula, and without Bridge funding in 2026-27, this support is not enough to prevent significant impacts across the region.

The Bank of Canada's Inflation Calculator shows that the cost of goods has increased by 43% since 2009. At the same time, AVRL's sustainable funding has only increased by 10%.

Despite these reductions in staffing and services, library usage is up. Borrowing (circulation) has increased by 40% since 2009 and free public internet access has increased 20% in the last 2 years alone. These statistics only paint part of the picture. Our communities rely on us for more than books. We are where people go for support, connection, and practical help. We provide access to reliable and accurate information, staff who can help you navigate questions, provide entertainment, lifelong learning opportunities, early literacy development, and a welcoming space for all members of the community. Libraries are community hubs that are in high demand and we want to be able to provide the services that our communities are asking of us.



## 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 above changes are the last resort after nearly two decades of mitigation strategies undertaken by AVRL, including:

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

The AVRL Board recognizes the profound impact these closures and service reductions will have on the communities we serve. In rural Nova Scotia, public libraries are essential hubs for literacy, lifelong learning, digital access, and social connection.

These decisions were not made lightly. They reflect the difficult reality of operating without sustainable funding despite years of mitigation efforts and ongoing advocacy. The Board deeply regrets that such measures are now necessary and remains hopeful that renewed provincial investment in public libraries will help prevent further erosion of these vital community services.

Sincerely,

Janet Ness, Chair  
Annapolis Valley Regional Library Board

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

## 'Missing an opportunity': Funding concern strains Pictou County libraries

By Jack Sponagle The Advocate  
Jun 11, 2026



Staff at libraries in Pictou County have felt the pressures that come with funding issues.

By Jack Sponagle The Advocate



The announcement that five libraries will close in the Annapolis Valley has renewed concern about the fate of others around the province.

On July 20, five branches of the Annapolis Valley Regional Library will be closed due to funding constraints, downsizing from 11 to six. Many in the region and the province are against these closures, saying that libraries provide an essential community service and need to be protected.

Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library (PARL) chief librarian Eric Stackhouse said due to the lack of funding, many libraries in this region have had to dial back their operations.

“What we did this year, on April 1, is we had to close New Glasgow and Antigonish branches on Sundays. We’ve reduced hours and we’ve also reduced our staffing, he said.

He said there are many concerned library users, especially now after the announced closure of the Annapolis Valley libraries

Stackhouse said while PARL’s reduced hours are not as “dramatic” as what is happening in the Valley, the pressures are still real.

His reaction to hearing about the Annapolis Valley closures was sadness.

“I can’t imagine what those communities have to go through. I have great sadness for those communities and their library users that depend on those services,” Stackhouse said.

He said for the last seven years, the library system has received what he calls “stagnant provincial funding.”

Stackhouse said this means having to reach out for fundraising opportunities.

“Because we heard from people, they like the library services they’ve been receiving and actually want more, the government keeps asking us to do more, with the same amount of money,” he said.

With closing on Sunday, residents who wish to use the libraries miss out on important community services.

“Obviously you lose access to reading material and things like that, but you also lose access to the internet, so that’s one less day people can come in and use the internet. A lot of people use us to access federal and government services and virtual health. They also lose a place to go in the community that is free, and that they can take their families, they can socialize,” he said.

“They think it’s just books. We contribute to the overall well-being of the community, there’s no question of that.”

Stackhouse said funding needs to be increased, not maintained — not cutting from the budget is great, but the budget is not providing enough for what the libraries are being asked to do.

“What we’re looking for from the government is stable and sufficient funding so we can get on with our job,” he said.

“It needs to be increased. Over the last 16 years, (the government) has only given one increase to the libraries. That’s not enough. When times are tough like they are now, when inflation is so high, people need libraries because they have less disposable income. The government should have funded us well when times were good. They didn’t do that, now here we are, times are not as good, people need us more than ever and we’re struggling.

“In 16 years, we’ve been through three governments. None of them have dealt with (the lack of funding).”

Stackhouse’s message to the decision makers is, “They are missing an opportunity, they should be joining our communities. They should work with our communities to make library services available for everyone.”

In a media release sent out on June 2, Liberal critic for Communities, Culture, and Tourism Derek Momborquette said, “These closures are an attack on literacy and a major loss for the communities that rely on these spaces every day. Libraries are more than buildings filled with books- they are places where people learn, connect, and access important services.

“These closures are devastating for Annapolis Valley, and we’re concerned this could be the beginning of a broader trend across the province unless the government steps in and restores funding.”

NDP critic Susan Leblanc said the Houston government has underfunded libraries for years while funding fails to keep up with costs.

“People across the province are angry and upset, and are afraid that the closure of the five libraries will be just the beginning. (Libraries) have been asked to do more with less for years and they’ve gone above and beyond, waiting for the Houston government to support them. They can’t wait any longer,” she said.

Premier Tim Houston answered questions about the library closures during a media availability June 4 in Halifax.

“We value all our libraries. They’re important to rural communities, they’re important to all Nova Scotians. There’s lots of positives that our libraries contribute to society. We have great respect for our library network,” he said.

“Which is actually why, in a time (when) we went through a very difficult budget, we maintained our library funding. There were no cuts to library funding.”

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Jack Sponagle