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Regina Public Library concerned cuts will hurt customers

Regina Public Library is concerned about the effects of recent cuts to library funding in the province.

The RPL Board of Directors continues to meet regarding specific impacts to RPL's budget and its ability to deliver services to the public.

"We are doing everything we can in the face of these cuts to minimize negative impact," Sean Quinlan, Chair of the RPL Board of Directors, said. "We remain committed to RPL's vision, which is to provide a dynamic hub of literacy, learning, curiosity and new ideas, integral to the social and economic vibrancy of Regina."

Quinlan expressed concerns about the reduction in funding of the provincial public libraries system.

"The nature of our one-province public library system is such that for some services, we all work together as one to meet customer needs. But when one part can't function properly, the whole system suffers," Quinlan said.

Sharing materials between libraries is a decades old practice in Saskatchewan. Since 2009, the entire province's public library collections have been available to customers at the click of a button. This ensures that no matter where customers live, they can access new materials quickly and easily. With the reduction in funding for regional library systems, the provincial system will no longer be sustainable in its present state.

"In 2016, RPL received 166,277 items from other libraries in the province and shipped 109,000 items to other libraries," Quinlan said. "How do we continue to meet user needs when it's clear our customers benefit from the provincial system?"

Regina Public Library is also concerned about the misinformation provided to the public regarding the nature of libraries and their use. "Libraries are constantly changing to remain relevant and meet the needs of their customers," Quinlan said. "We have known for years that the people of Regina – and Saskatchewan – love their libraries. It's evident in the number of people visiting our branches, accessing our materials and programs, and using our online services."

Factual information about Regina Public Library and its use by customers is included below.

Regina Public Library will host two information sessions regarding the effects of the provincial budget cuts on Regina's public library and the Saskatchewan libraries system. The sessions will be April 12 & 13 at 7:30pm in the Central Library mezzanine, 2311 – 12th Avenue.

For more information:

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Regina Public Library Fact Sheet

- The number of visitors to Regina Public Library branches has increased 13% over the last five years: in 2016 we had 1.5 million visits.
- Last year we circulated over 2.2 million books, DVDs, eBooks, eAudiobooks, magazines and more. We lend out 17 times more print materials than eBooks or eAudiobooks.
- We continue to purchase digital assets and licences so customers have free access to online materials such as eBooks, digital magazines, newspapers from around the world, streaming music, movies and television programs, and a range of digital databases and services such as Lynda.com, Gale Courses and Mango Languages (a resource to help customers learn a new language).
- Use of our digital offerings continues to climb, and we continue to build our library of online resources:
 - The number of eBooks and eAudiobooks borrowed has increased by 327% since 2011. In 2016, over 120,000 eBooks and eAudiobooks were borrowed.
 - Use of our free streaming music, TV and movies services has increased 6,155% since we started offering access in 2013. In 2016 almost 43,000 digital music, movies and television files were accessed by RPL customers.
- Our branches are community centres and meeting places, and most in-branch activities don't require a library card. Visitors use our 3D printers, play video games, participate in RPL programs, borrow laptops, read newspapers, do homework, search for jobs, learn English, view our art collection, meet up with friends, browse for books, and much more.
- Our programs provide opportunities for civic engagement. Last year we offered over 7,000 programs in our branches to 130,000 participants. Topics included financial literacy, early literacy programs, art programs through the Dunlop Art Gallery, and more.
- Use of our in-branch WiFi is up 1,727% in the last five years – in 2016 there were over one million sessions.
- We recently unveiled a new, free service that enables customers to transfer materials such as VHS home movies, cassette tapes and more to digital formats.
- Over 300 volunteers helped support one-on-one learning programs offered by the library including homework help, English skills training, career coaching, and teen volunteers assisting children with reading and math.
- RPL continues to provide materials to home-bound customers, as well as blocks of toys, print and other materials to licenced daycares across the city, and curriculum resources for teachers.