

Hello everyone,

The last 30 or so days have been historic for library workers and the citizens of Saskatchewan. The government's surprise announcement on March 22 to substantially cut funding to seven regional library systems and in Regina and Saskatoon brought forth a groundswell of grassroots activity to have the decision reversed. SLA's message from the outset was that all citizens must have equal access to all library services and resources. We created a Save Public Libraries page at <http://saskla.ca/advocacy/cuts-to-budget-information-page>. It housed fact sheets, letters written to stakeholders, statements from other organizations, stories from the media, a letter writing toolkit, and more.

It was gratifying for me to have communicated (email, text, social media, phone, face to face) with many passionate people. I recall one tongue in cheek comment by an individual on social media who thanked the government by giving citizens a unique opportunity to demonstrate the immense value of public libraries.

Campaigns by the public were quickly established to write letters and emails to MLAs, and circulate two complementing petitions. The Drop Everything and Read event was historic and arguably the first province-wide phenomenon in Canada. These actions, and many others, were critical in the second surprise announcement by the government on April 24 to have funding reinstated. It was a victory for everyone by sending a message to the provincial government that libraries matter.

However, the decision on April 24 mentioned some very important actions that will require continued advocacy work by everyone. The Public Libraries Act of 1996 will be reviewed and there will be a consultation process with several key stakeholders within and outside the library community. SLA and all citizens will need to continue promoting the value of libraries and effectively engage with government and many key community leaders across Saskatchewan in the months ahead.

On a final note, the timing of our annual conference couldn't be better. I'm looking forward to seeing some old friends and meeting new people in beautiful Waskesiu. It will be a great time to learn, socialize, network, and celebrate our association and the vitality of libraries!

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Best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Michael Shires', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Shires, President

Phone: 306.585.5418

Email: Michael.Shires@uregina.ca