

APLA Protests NL Government's Cuts to Libraries and New Tax on Books



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2016, Halifax: Meeting in Halifax this week, the Atlantic Provinces Library Association took the opportunity to decry the recent announcement by the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador that it will close 54 of the province's 95 public libraries over the next two years. APLA President Suzanne van den Hoogen had this to say about the pending closures:

"The importance of public libraries cannot be overstated. They promote literacy by introducing young minds to the joys of reading and the acquisition of knowledge; they are an entry point into the world of lifelong learning; they are safe places for vulnerable members of the community, the young and the old, to engage in wholesome and fulfilling activities; they are meeting places where ideas are shared and plans that further individual and community goals are hatched; they are unique in their mission, providing irreplaceable services to their communities. In short, public libraries improve quality of life for those citizens who have ready access to them. There is no question that the human costs of these closures (to the 64 staff who will lose their jobs and the library patrons who will lose their services) will by far eclipse the projected million dollars in savings. We urge the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reconsider."

News of the planned closures has generated passionate reactions from individuals and organizations alike. NL author Lisa Moore has been particularly vocal on the issue, declaring in an article published by *The Walrus* on May 17, 2016, that the closing of the libraries is nothing short of "an attack on writers, publishers, students – and culture."

For his part, author Paul Butler (who lives in Corner Brook) told Morning Show host Bernice Hillier in a CBC interview broadcast on May 25 that, "It is almost impossible to imagine how you could do more damage while achieving less savings than closing 54 public libraries."

In one of his famous rants, well-loved comedian Rick Mercer, himself from the Island, declared "If you want to destroy rural Newfoundland and harm children, it's an excellent start." Mercer was equally critical of the provincial government's decision to introduce a new tax of 10% on books. "When you increase taxes on cigarettes [he said April 29 on CBC radio], you raise money but the side effects is less people smoke. So when you are increasing taxes on books, you are accepting the fact that fewer books will be sold. And so it is an attack on literacy, there's no other way to look at it."

The Newfoundland and Labrador Library Association (NLLA), the Writer's Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador (WANL), the Canadian Library Association (CLA), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), and local library boards, amongst others, have all been very active in protesting the closures as well as the new tax on books since they were announced in April.

APLA hosted a Save NL Public Libraries Rally and LOVE-IN and at their annual conference and vowed to keep up the pressure. A resolution was passed at its Ordinary General Meeting of June 1 which commits the association to further advocacy efforts, in partnership with other interested groups, to stop the closures and to reverse the decision on the book tax.

For more information, please contact Suzanne van den Hoogen or Krista Godfrey. Contact information can be found at <http://apla.ca> and at <https://nlla.ca/>

ABOUT APLA:

The Atlantic Provinces Library Association counts close to 400 personal and institutional members drawn from public, academic, school, and special libraries scattered throughout the region. The association's mission is to promote the interests of libraries in the Atlantic provinces while fostering the development of librarians, library technicians and information professionals through cooperative efforts and the promotion of library interests.