



Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador

208-223 Duckworth Street, Haymarket Square, St. John's, NL, A1C 6N1

T: 709-739-5215 or 1-866-739-5215 E: w anl@nf.aibn.com

Website: www.w anl.ca

Facebook: www.facebook.com/writersalliance Twitter: @WANL

Media Release

For Immediate Release

WANL Demonstrates Support For Libraries Across Newfoundland and Labrador

(May 11, 2016 – St. John's, NL) The government of Newfoundland and Labrador recently announced the pending closure of 54 public libraries in the province. The Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador (WANL), the provincial literary sector organization, believes this to be a counter-productive move that will harm the individual communities in which these libraries are situated, the individuals who use these libraries, and the province as a whole.

"A blow to libraries is a blow to literacy, and a blow to literacy is a blow to economic development," says Denise Flint, WANL's president. "Almost 57 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do not have the literacy skills they need, a higher percentage than any other province and those with low literacy skills are more than twice as likely to be unemployed," she says. Studies have shown that a one per cent increase in average literacy scores can result in a permanent 1.5 per cent increase in GDP per capita. As well, readers have better physical and mental health, are more likely to volunteer in their communities and are more likely to report being strongly satisfied with life. Libraries support literacy. In fact, the New Brunswick government, recognizing the importance of libraries, has recently announced plans to greatly expand the opening hours of many of its libraries as part of its strategy to boost literacy.

Closing libraries has other detrimental effects besides its impacts on literacy because libraries are more than just repositories of books. "They are often the hub of a community," says Flint. "Low income and marginalized people, who rely on public libraries for Internet access, access to government forms, job searches and a myriad of other information, will be disproportionately affected. So will people who live in rural areas and women, who make up the majority of both readers and library employees."

To show its support for the threatened libraries and the library system as a whole, WANL members will be holding public readings in libraries across the province. Individual members will be contacting libraries and inviting the public to turn out and join them in showing their solidarity with the libraries of this province. Even if we are talking about libraries, those bastions of the hushed voice, it's time to make some noise. These libraries are used. The \$1 million the government has calculated it will save by closing more than half the libraries of this province is not worth the long term inequalities and further economic decline such a move will cause. WANL urges the government to review and revise this decision.

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Media Contact: Denise Flint, President, WANL (709) 895-0261 dflint@nl.rogers.com