



CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD
CEO'S OFFICE, CENTRAL LIBRARY, 800 – 3 ST SE, CALGARY, AB T2G 2E7

November 29, 2018

RE: City Cuts to Library Capital and Operational Budget

Dear Council Members,

I was disheartened to learn of your decision to cut the Library's proposed operational increases over the next four years as well as a reduction in the capital budget.

The preliminary Library budget as recommended by City staff included slight adjustments over the next four years to account for operational increases. Yesterday, when the Library Budget came before Council these operational increases were cut. This will leave us with a \$2.8 million gap by the fourth year of this budget.

It is hard to judge the exact depth of impact of this operational cut on our 20 community libraries across Calgary. The Library expects cuts to security and facility maintenance, reduced hours, and fewer outreach activities. In general, these cuts can be viewed as reducing public access and impacting the quality of our Library environments.

The Library requested roughly \$19 million for the refreshing and refurbishment of libraries over the next four years. As I understand it, the City is currently recommending \$11.2 million. The Library has provided you with information on how these improvements would impact libraries in wards across the City. While this reduced budget would include the delayed Sage Hill site to move forward, it does not include any planning money for expanded or new facilities for Louise Riley, Forest Lawn or Giuffre Library.

The last City budget cycle supported the Library through incredible growth across the system, which culminated in the opening of the new Central Library – that has already received over 200,000 visits in just one month – but we are more than just one location, our entire system sees nearly 7 million visits annually and we have over 680,000 active members. These proposed cuts would come at a time when the Library needs to maintain programs, services, and facilities that are being well-used by a diverse group of Calgarians.

The Library appreciates the hard choices that Council must make during this challenging budget cycle, but I would stress the importance of investing in the maintenance of truly free and accessible services for our citizens during an economic downturn and the incredible return on this investment.

In *A Prosperous City* report, 83% of Calgarians reported the Library as important to their quality of life with a 94% satisfaction rate. We see the impact of Library services each and every day, for example the young children that eagerly greet a Story Truck that pulls up to their housing complex or day home, or fewer community partnerships to support newcomers, both are services that would certainly be impacted by these cuts.

The Library has a huge impact on the quality of life for Calgarians and in many ways we are driving a strong future for Calgary, both socially and economically, so that all Calgarians can reach their potential.

Sincerely,

Avnish Mehta
Chair, Calgary Public Library

