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Regan: Nova Scotia's Library Services Threatened



(Halifax, NS) Liberal education critic Kelly Regan says the NDP government is on the verge of making decisions that will damage Nova Scotia's library system and jeopardize some of the province's most vulnerable citizens.

Regan wants a commitment from the NDP to fund library services for visually impaired Nova Scotians and a promise to continue support for internet services at libraries across the province.

"There are two issues here and they directly affect susceptible and at-risk Nova Scotians," explains Regan. "At this point, the provincial government is failing to recognize the valuable role libraries play in the lives of so many."

"The Canadian National Institute for the Blind has funded library lending services for decades through charitable dollars," says the Liberal MLA for Bedford-Birch Cove. "Facing an aging population and increasing demands, the CNIB has given both the provincial and federal government ample warning that their finances are such that they cannot continue."

The CNIB is asking government for \$166,000 in fiscal 2010-11 and \$192,000 in fiscal 2011-12 to continue service, which includes money for books in Braille and audio format, downloadable books and a children's portal.

"We are optimistic that the Province will partner with the federal government to ensure the 30,000 Nova Scotians who are blind or partially sighted have access to equitable library services," says Duncan Williams, CNIB's executive director for the Maritimes.

"Darrell Dexter needs to step up and assure visually impaired Nova Scotians that they will still be able to access the many literary lending services that CNIB has provided in the past," Regan says.

Similarly, cuts to internet service for the province's 270 libraries are a direct hit on those who live on limited incomes.

"Many seniors and those living on income assistance use the internet service at libraries to keep

in touch with family, to get their daily news, to do their homework - and to look for jobs,” says Regan. “

“I cannot fathom why Finance Minister Graham Steele is even contemplating a cut to this vital service. It’s a direct attack on those who are not financially able to have internet in their homes. This is about priorities and clearly, vulnerable Nova Scotians are no longer a priority for the NDP.”

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