

LIBRARY FUNDING



BACKGROUND INFO

The library funding formula for operational costs is as follows: Province 71%, Municipalities 26%, Library boards 3%. In HRM, it is reversed: HRM 71%, province 26%. In many cases, additional funding from municipalities and boards has decreased the provincial %. Municipalities also pay capital costs for library buildings and additional operational costs that are not included in the formula.

Since 2009, there has been one permanent increase to provincial funding in the formula for operational costs. In 2019, \$2 million was added following a review (\$14.4M to \$16.4M). This represents a 13.9% increase, while inflation rose by over 47% to date.

A provincial committee reviewed public library funding in 2024, but its recommendations have not been implemented or publicly released. In the interim, provincial “bridge funding” has been provided outside of the formula, most recently \$1.6 million was provided in 2025-2026. In the 2026–2027 provincial budget, funding remained unchanged at \$16.4 million; however, “bridge funding” was not continued.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE

Public libraries are one of the most impactful and cost-effective investments the Province can make, supporting not only literacy, but also health, education, workforce development, and community safety.

Many regional libraries have implemented significant cuts to staff, hours, and services to remain operational. Many have been drawing heavily on reserves for multiple years, which is not a sustainable solution. Even with increased municipal contributions, several libraries remain at risk of closure without increased provincial funding.

Facing a deficit, Annapolis Valley Regional Libraries announced that 5 of 11 branches will close in July 2026.

NSFM ADVOCACY & RESEARCH

Since 2024, five municipalities have written letters to NSFM and at least 22 municipalities have written directly to the Province regarding fair and equitable funding for public libraries. During this time NSFM has written to the Province three times regarding library funding. Seeking stronger municipal representation on the Library Funding Review Committee, urging municipal consultation, and echoing calls for continued bridge funding.



Funding for public libraries became an NSFM advocacy priority in February 2026. Subsequently, NSFM wrote to 11 Ministers outlining the critical role of libraries in implementing provincial services across departments.

NEXT STEPS

NSFM is seeking a meeting with Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage and will advocate for meaningful, adequate, and immediate bridge funding to prevent library closures. In addition, NSFM will advocate for the Province to provide any findings or updates from the 2024 Library Funding Review, as well as support broader reforms to establish a funding model that is adequate, sustainable, and reflective of all municipal contributions to public libraries.