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August 24, 2019

Honourable Kaycee Madu
Minister of Municipal Affairs
#132 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Madu:

In Alberta we are privileged to have the provincially-funded SuperNet backbone for high-speed connectivity. Through the Public Library Services Branch (PLSB), the Province funds basic SuperNet connectivity for Alberta public libraries, and this is a much appreciated and essential service. Public libraries are connected to Alberta SuperNet and receive between 5 Mbps (smaller libraries) and 100 Mbps (larger libraries) in bandwidth.

Thank you for supporting SuperNet connectivity for libraries, as it is critical to day-to-day library operations. However, there are two challenges facing rural Alberta libraries. First, 5 Mbps is no longer adequate to serve library customers who want to conduct Internet searches, check email, stream or download resources, and take advantage of distance learning. Libraries provide more and more digital services to a public that is used to high speed and instant connectivity. Several of the smaller libraries in our region regularly use an average of 5+ Mbps per month. Monthly demand for High Prairie library typically exceeds 10 Mbps per month. The library computers are used heavily by people from a number of First Nation and Métis communities, and the lack of bandwidth is very frustrating. Busy libraries, even the smaller ones, need a minimum of 20 Mbps.

The second concern is last mile connectivity. While a library may be able to provide high-speed broadband access, many individuals in surrounding rural areas have limited connectivity. They are unable to take advantage of online library services such as downloading eBooks, reading eMagazines and eNewspapers, and accessing music and movies.


The PLSB is waiting for Service Alberta to roll out its new SuperNet service catalog, based on the new contract with Bell that was signed in 2018. This has taken some time because over 4,000 sites need to be evaluated and migrated to the new service suite. In the meantime, many smaller libraries with high demand for digital services are unable to meet those demands.

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We would like to ask that you work with your Service Alberta colleagues to expedite the roll out of the SuperNet service catalog, and also provide additional funding to the PLSB to increase bandwidth for selected libraries that constantly exceed their bandwidth. Perhaps there is some help to be had from the recently released federal *High-Speed Access for All: Canada's Connectivity Strategy*. The Strategy and associated funding aims to provide all Canadians with access to affordable high-speed Internet and mobile wireless coverage. This is certainly needed in many parts of northwestern Alberta, which is the area served by Peace Library System.

Thank you for your support for Alberta public libraries. Peace Library System serves 46 public libraries and, collectively, Alberta's seven library systems serve over 270 public libraries. The majority of these libraries are in rural areas of Alberta. We ask for your help to ensure that residents in smaller communities have access to the same library services as residents of larger centres.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Carolyn Kolebaba".

Carolyn Kolebaba, Chair
Peace Library Board

cc: Hon. Nate Glubish, Minister of Service Alberta
Diana Davidson, Director, Public Library Services Branch
Peace Library System Member Municipalities
Peace Library System Board Members