

March 19, 2020

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and recommendations by the Provincial and Federal Governments to curtail the spread of the virus, the Manitoba Library Association (MLA) is recommending that public libraries in Manitoba should close to the public.

In respect of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and in response to provincial and federal government pronouncements that public events should be curtailed and that people should exercise 'social distancing' to reduce the spread of the virus, and in recognition of the fact that at least 39 public libraries in Manitoba have already decided to close access to the public, MLA recommends that all public libraries in Manitoba close their physical premises to the public. (motion passed March 19, 2020)

As of March 19, 50 out of 56 public library systems in Manitoba have announced they have or will be imminently closing access to the public. Many of these libraries continue to operate behind closed doors providing services to patrons in relation to eLibraires and other online resources, responding to phone and internet inquiries, updating social media and website, cataloging, and of course cleaning.

MLA has been daily contact with public library administrators and trustees across the Province in respect of ongoing COVID-19 issues. There are many operational issues that will arise with the closures, in particular how public libraries can effectively operate and serve their patrons. MLA is interested in supporting such discussions.

MLA recognizes that public libraries are essential components of their communities, and the decisions to close to the public were difficult decisions by the respective library boards. MLA encourages the continued operation of the libraries, with appropriate safeguards and precautions for staff. To the extent that staff may telework or work from home, it is also encouraged.

MLA encourages every public library to provide an update on its status on its website and Facebook for patrons' information.