

Monday, June 28 2021

Hon. Brian Pallister, Premier  
Room 204 Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

To the Honourable Brian Pallister,

I am writing on behalf of the Board, and members of the Manitoba Library Association.

Echoing concerns recently brought forward by the Association of Manitoba Museums, we are likewise concerned about continued closure of libraries, along with museums and galleries, in the most recent health order.

Manitoba's public libraries have implemented necessary procedural changes to deliver services in a safe manner. Capacity limits, group size limits, household groupings, masking, distancing can be and have been adapted to public library environments as the pandemic has unfolded. We likewise find it puzzling that Manitobans can go to a gym, can eat in restaurants, can shop in stores, but cannot visit a public library.

Public libraries offer vital and essential services to Manitobans. For those in our communities without access to technology or reliable home internet connections, the public library space facilitates access to health information, economic and employment opportunities, and democratic engagement with government. The digital divide disproportionately affects rural communities and vulnerable populations. Public libraries play an essential role in ensuring that all Manitobans can access information in an equitable way.

Public library spaces are also places of contemplation, dialogue, and healing. As our province grapples with complex social issues, libraries provide a nurturing intellectual and social space for citizens to engage and access resources that support their own health, social, economic, and emotional wellbeing. Ongoing closure of these organizations once again disproportionately impacts rural communities, youth, and those in poverty.

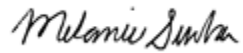
We feel it is also important to express that public libraries and other GLAM institutions can help Manitobans recognize, reflect and educate themselves to the atrocities of the residential school system in Canada, especially in light of the ongoing investigation of unmarked graves at former IRS sites.

MLA members take the risk of COVID very seriously and we too support the efforts of the provincial government in promoting the safety and health of our communities throughout this pandemic. We would not advocate for measures that would unnecessarily create public health risks. At this stage, we do not understand the reasoning or evidence for continuing to keep libraries, museums and galleries closed, and acknowledge that these closures create their own negative health and social

consequences. We therefore request that the provincial government reconsider the continued closure of our organizations.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melanie Sucha".

Ms. Melanie Sucha  
President, Manitoba Library Association  
[president@mla.mb.ca](mailto:president@mla.mb.ca)

cc: Hon. Cathy Cox, Hon. Heather Stefanson, Deputy Minister Karen Herd, Deputy Minister Jeff Hnatuk