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St. Albert Public Library Board responds to potential library budget cuts

Media statement from St. Albert Public Library Board Co-Chairs Colleen McClure and Deborah McTaggart-Baird

“St. Albert Public Library Board Trustees were shocked and disappointed to learn that a proposal was put before St. Albert City Council on August 16 to slash library funding by 35% over the next three years. Cuts of this magnitude will imperil the continued operation of everything the Library does, from early literacy programs such as storytimes to Outreach services to seniors programming. St. Albertans who rely on the wide range of free Library services, collections, programs and supports will bear the impact.

“A 35% cut to Library funding targets our most vulnerable citizens. Such cuts will have the biggest negative impact on vulnerable citizens’ ability to recover from the pandemic: in particular, young families, isolated individuals, new immigrants, seniors, children, and those looking to improve job and career circumstances. We are committed to supporting residents in their most critical time of need and do not believe it is wise to cut services at the expense of our neediest citizens.

“These significant proposed cuts will diminish the Library’s ability to enhance early childhood literacy outcomes for St. Albert families at a time when students, parents and educators are already tapped out after more than two years of learning and education challenges.

“The proposed cuts are disproportionate. City administration proposes deep cuts to the Library budget immediately, while proposing not to consider other internal assessments and cuts until 2024.

“The Library has been operating with reduced funding since 2020. Over the past 2.5 years, the Library has reduced collections, staff complement, and operating hours. We are doing our part to respond to the current economic reality, and will continue to do so in an equitable way, as a partner.

“The Library Board strongly encourages City Council to reject deep cuts that disproportionately target the Library. The public library is a core community hub. It serves the unique purpose of serving citizens across every demographic and every life stage, all for free, and all in the service of creating a healthy, resilient community. The Library will continue to respond to the proposed cuts over the coming months.”

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