



## Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: WCRL funding request

Date: April 10, 2021

### VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

### **Background:**

The Western Counties Regional Library has requested a funding increase for the operational budget of 2021-22. The request is attached for your consideration. Typical funding for the WCRL amounts to \$54,013, and the request is to increase to \$63,900 (increase of \$9,887).

The request has come from the WCRL directly. Typically, funding increases of this kind would first come as instruction from the Province of NS through a one year notice letter, that would be sent to the NSFPM and then to all municipalities.

The Provincial government and the Libraries across NS did negotiate an increase in funding pre-pandemic. The Municipalities were surprised to hear of the increase, as we were not engaged in the process. A one year letter was initially prepared last year but was rescinded. According to our AMA Executive Director, Janice Wentzell, the letter was rescinded because the Province heard that there are in-kind operational contributions being made to library boards by some municipalities that they hadn't captured so they wanted to accurately reflect current contributions. I am not certain what these in-kind contributions are, but in short they missed a step. In the meantime, the WCRL is awaiting funding increases from municipalities. They are in a new funding agreement with the Province of NS, so they did receive that increase. Municipal portion of funding for WCRL is collectively at 10%.

### **MGA considerations:**

Libraries are a typical traditional municipal service, that is shared financially with the Provincial government. This is an eligible expense.

### **CAO's Recommendation:**

While it is true the libraries' funding has been stagnant, the responsibility to negotiate increases rests with the Province of NS. The agreed upon process in these funding increases that are tied into provincial policy is that we receive a one year notice. We have not received this notice.

This process is an important one for municipalities. It is one that the Department of Municipal Affairs endorses also. It gives us a year to plan for the increase, and in most cases, it engages

municipalities in the decision itself. While this increase would not be considered substantial when compared with overall budget, there are many other such funding agreements with the Province that would have far greater implications.

It is for this reason that I would recommend against a funding increase. Council may choose to waive formality on this and increase the funding this year. I expect that we will receive our one-year notice for next year's budget, so the increase will come at some point. I would also point out that municipalities will be making independent decisions for and against this request, so there will likely be inconsistent application of this request.

**Suggested motion:**

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**Following CAO recommendation**

Move that the request for funding be denied, as the Municipality has not received its one year notice from the Province of NS respecting funding increases.

**Alternative motion (Council chooses to waive formality of one-year notice)**

Move that the WCRL funding for 2021-22 be approved at \$63,900, and that the CAO include that line item in the 2021-22 operating budget.