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## **Eastern Counties Regional Library to Launch Nova Scotia's First Open Library**

Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL) has received \$88,000 in funding from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage's Culture Innovation Fund for the creation of Nova Scotia's very first *Open Library*. An *Open Library* uses technology to offer extended open hours to the community, thereby transforming library use into on-demand service.

"The Government of Nova Scotia is proud to support this innovative project. The ECRL has been an important institution in our area for many years with its base in Mulgrave, and I applaud them on the invaluable work they have done in our rural communities," said the Honourable Lloyd Hines, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and MLA for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

ECRL will launch the Open Library as part of a three-year pilot project, to be located at the Cyril Ward Memorial Library in Guysborough. "The quality of life in the Municipality of the District of Guysborough is already at a high level," says Warden Vernon Pitts. "Adding the Open Library service to our local library coupled with our recently opened Chedabucto Lifestyle Complex places MODG at the top in the provision of quality of life opportunities for residents."

With the Municipality of the District of Guysborough taking a leading role, the goal of this pilot project is to assess the potential of the Open Library technology to double, or even triple, public access to libraries throughout rural Nova Scotia. ECRL is working with library technology company Bibliotheca, who will supply their open+™ system to operate the Open Library during extended hours, and a self-service kiosk that will allow customers to independently check out and return materials. There are over 500 libraries in the world that have successfully extended their service with Bibliotheca's open+™ system since 2004.

"Our staff are fantastic at helping people, but sometimes people don't need help; what they need is for the library to be open early in the morning or later in the evening. We want to trust the community with access to the library at a time that is convenient for them. With more access to books and our other collections, public computers, WiFi, and a quiet and creative space to meet or study, we believe people will be better able to make the library part of their daily lives," said Chief Librarian Laura Emery, adding, "I want to emphasize that an Open Library is not a staff-less library. The assistance, personal service, and community engagement that our employees provide could never be replaced with technology, however we could never afford to staff our libraries 50-75 hours per week. The goal of implementing the Open Library technology is for everyone to be able to use the library, which in turn will generate more work for staff, and will allow employees to focus more of their time on what really matters: helping people."

ECRL would like to commend the Province of Nova Scotia for this significant investment in the future of public library service in rural Nova Scotia. ECRL is pleased to work in partnership with the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage to develop and promote our cultural resources for all Nova Scotians.

The Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage launched the Culture Innovation Fund earlier this year. The fund, announced in January, supports new and innovative culture initiatives that address social priorities and economic opportunities across the province. Applications are accepted year-round. Creation of the fund was a priority action item in the province's Culture Action Plan, launched in 2017. The plan includes a focus on the social impact and benefits of culture.

The Culture Innovation Fund is made possible through Support4Culture, a designated lottery program from Nova Scotia Gaming that supports arts, culture, and heritage in communities across Nova Scotia.

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