



**SASKATCHEWAN  
LIBRARY  
TRUSTEES'  
ASSOCIATION**

**BRIEF  
TO  
HONOURABLE DUSTIN  
DUNCAN  
2021**

**Cc Honourable Laura Ross, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport  
Honourable Everett Hindley, Minister of Mental Health and  
Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health**

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*Nothing is pleasanter than exploring a library.*

- Walter Savage Landor

## **Introduction**

Libraries during this time of lockdown and COVID have illustrated the importance of community and a shared public good. Our libraries play a particularly important role, both in promoting general wellbeing, and as part of a support package to people when life's struggles challenge their mental health. As stated on the Province's website, libraries support literacy and lifelong learning for Saskatchewan residents and have an important role in the educational, recreational, and cultural enrichment of our province.

Basic library services have blossomed to include computer usage, internet access, on-line resources and databases, legal information, a wide variety and diversity of programming, and 3-D printing, to name a few of the services now available. Libraries as a source of equality of opportunity for members cannot be overstated. The Saskatchewan Information Library Service Consortium (SILS – One Province, One Library Card) and the combination of municipal and regional delivery systems are distinctly Saskatchewan and provide equitable access to people across the province regardless of economic circumstance or geographic location.

SLTA strives to remain a strong representative voice for all libraries in this province.

## **The Challenges**

This is not without challenges. Saskatchewan libraries must keep up with changes in technology, infrastructure costs, rising costs in books and other materials, staff and budget shortages, and a growing demand from customers for more information.

The task is immense, and budgets limited, but with supportive leadership from system boards and directors much has been done with little.

## **Concerns and Recommendations**

SLTA asked regional and municipal systems for their top priorities and needs for their community libraries.

### ***1. Operating Funds -***

Systems need reliable and sufficient baseline funding with reasonable increases every year to maintain service levels which include operating funds for headquarters to ensure appropriate staffing levels, especially in leadership positions. Support funds are provided through a combination of sources including provincial, municipalities and local fundraising.

### ***2. Provincial Grant -***

In the 2021/22 provincial budget, an increase of 2.3% was provided to various areas of the Ministry of Education (Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12, early learning and childcare, and the provincial library and literacy office). However, the resource sharing grant to libraries including additional funding for Community Net, SILS, out-of-province interlibrary loan and support service for people with

print disabilities remained unchanged at 0%. Over the past 10 years since 2012, while Canadian CPI has increased over 14%, resource sharing grants to libraries have increased by just over 4%. This has put extreme strain on the system, and provincial resources are needed to play “catch-up” in any number of areas, including equitable and competitive salaries to ensure recruitment and retention. The most central priority is that fair and progressive funding is provided for the operations of the provinces’ regional library headquarters.

**3. Visionary Resources –**

Visionary resources to allow for continued enhancement such as legal access and employment information, which include services for all residents. As local hubs within the community, libraries are well positioned to serve as information service centres.

This was discussed at the 2020 meeting with Minister Wyant. We respectfully ask if there is any plan for moving forward.

**4. Sector Plan –**

Development of a Saskatchewan Library sector plan is imperative. Since the development of the Education Sector Strategic Plan, Library Directors and Board Chairs in meetings with the Provincial Library and Literacy Office (PLLO) and Ministry of Education leadership have requested a strategic plan for the Saskatchewan Library system, including clarification of the role of libraries and literacy within the Ministry. Libraries need a champion in the government – presumably, someone from the Minister’s Office or the PLLO.

Development of a Library Sector Plan was discussed at the 2020 meeting with Minister Wyant. We respectfully ask for an update.

**In Conclusion**

We respectfully ask, that as the Minister responsible for the Saskatchewan library systems, you make a commitment to Saskatchewan libraries and to library services for all.

On behalf of SLTA and Saskatchewan library trustees we thank you for the opportunity to meet and present this information to you.