



“It was from my own early experience that I decided there was no use to which money could be applied so productive of good to girls and boys who have good within them and ability and ambition to develop it as the founding of a public library.”

- *Andrew Carnegie*

SLTA BRIEF TO MINISTER DONNA HARPAUER 2011

**SLTA
PROMOTING LITERACY FOR FIRST NATIONS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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INTRODUCTION

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association (SLTA) is a voluntary association of public library trustees. The SLTA advocates, and supports, the Saskatchewan library community speaking out on issues of concern. Libraries have a long-standing, and mutually beneficial, relationship with the government. This relationship we hope to solidify in the months and years to come.

SLTA represents over 300 public libraries and more than 2,500 trustees at the local or library system level throughout Saskatchewan. All Saskatchewan residents may access information in public libraries without a user fee. Resource-sharing and cooperation are the fundamental strengths of Saskatchewan's "one province" library system – a system that is the envy of other provincial library systems across Canada.

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association would like to thank the Minister for the increase in funding received last year. The opportunity to share and consult with the Minister on a yearly basis is very much appreciated. This continued communication will greatly enhance the public library system in Saskatchewan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our public libraries are the public face of our communities and our province. Saskatchewan libraries reach out to communities, and provide a variety of information, resources, useful services, and programs to all residents. Libraries are a focal point for greater community cohesion and community building. We are moving toward an age of innovation in our society, and our economy will require easy access to information. Literacy is critical to the Province's successful future.

The SLTA believes:

Libraries need to be funded in a predictable, stable, and long term manner.

The SLTA proposes:

That additional funding should be applied in three major areas of need:

- Operations
- Staff Recruitment and Retention
- Capital Infrastructure.

KEY ISSUES

Preface

Technology and the age of innovation have greatly changed libraries. Libraries have always been the leaders in information storage, dissemination, and use by the public. Libraries are now leaders in community volunteerism, early childhood learning and development, literacy programs, English as a second language, business information, and many other areas.

The evolving Saskatchewan public library system will be a vital component in the construction of a vibrant, productive, and successful Province of Saskatchewan. The library system provides the capacity to filter the plethora of information available and provide all of Saskatchewan residents with the information necessary to make Saskatchewan a world leader.

For the libraries in the Province of Saskatchewan to be in the vanguard of this revolution significant funding increases in operations, staff-retention, and capital are required.

Operational Funding

Libraries require exponential funding in order to provide modern services and meet the demands of technology.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

Libraries require a trained, bright, energetic staff component that is adept at organization and utilization of the potential that is available through technology. Library staff is under-paid and with a booming economy, it is even harder for libraries to compete for these people.

Capital Infrastructure

“We shape our buildings: Therefore they shape us.”

- ***Winston Churchill***

Libraries are the heart of communities throughout Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is prospering; our libraries should be the public face that projects a vibrant population, knowledgeable, cultured and informed. We need new libraries to accommodate new library service.

While the development of technology has radically changed some components of library services, the role of the public library as a physical space that engages the community is more essential than ever. Capital infrastructure continues to deteriorate and require significant funds to modernize. It is worth noting that public libraries represent the only sector within the Ministry of Education that does not receive capital support.

The Saskatchewan’s Single Integrated Library System was an appreciated and valuable addition to library services in Saskatchewan. This is an example of how the Government of

Saskatchewan works with the library system making it a valuable and essential service for a growing and booming economy. It is very important to be aware that this initiative is just a start in a process that will require further steps to keep Saskatchewan libraries in the forefront of library services in Canada and in the world. It must be continued to carry libraries forward into the 21st century.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the rationale and issues identified in this brief:

- ***The SLTA proposes that the Government of Saskatchewan commit exponential increases to resource sharing grants to support libraries.***
- ***The SLTA proposes the province include public libraries in the government's capital programs.***

CONCLUSION

"When I am in a strange city or town with some time to spare, I head for the library. It's a place where I know I'll find peace, refuge, friendly faces, and of course, wonderful books. The time I am there is always well spent."

- ***Warren Berger***
Author

Saskatchewan has a burgeoning economy. As people from all over the world come to Saskatchewan their first stop is often a public library. Libraries help these people become part of the Saskatchewan mosaic. Adequate funding of libraries sends the message that Saskatchewan is a place for families to live and work.

The resource sharing grant that all public library systems receive has not increased significantly, and has not kept pace with increases from municipalities or with inflation. This needs to change. Libraries are amazing and cost effective resources - essential in developing strong communities. Funding needs to increase.

For more information on the Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association, please see our website at <http://www.libraries.gov.sk.ca/slta/>.