



SASKATCHEWAN LIBRARY TRUSTEE'S ASSOCIATION

Meeting with the Minister Tuesday, June 8, 2021 3:30-4:15 pm

In Attendance: President Steven Allen (Wheatland), SLTA Treasurer John Thronberg (SPL), SLTA Executive Director Nancy Kennedy, Hon. Dustin Duncan, Minister of Education, Kenneth Cotterill ED, Donna Johnson ED, SLTA Board Member Sharon Armstrong, SLTA Board Member Dennis Taylor.

President Steven Allen explained what comprises SLTA. He also gave a brief overview of how the Minister's Brief is prepared. Steven thanks Minister Duncan for taking the time to meet with SLTA. Minister Duncan noted that one of the highlights of growing up was waiting for the library book mobile to come to town.

Steven reiterated that libraries are a community hub where all people are welcome. Board member Dennis Taylor noted how libraries have changed and grown dramatically over the years, and the value they provide to the people of Saskatchewan.

The Challenges

President Allen presented some of the challenges currently faced by libraries.

- In many cases the only stable internet available is through the library. It is imperative that computer systems are updated, and that people have access to systems. Steven noted that justice systems can now tap into information available from libraries. The stumbling block is stable baseline reliable funding.
- Over the last 10 years, baseline funding has not increased substantially, and this has hurt libraries.
- Library systems need the ability and resources to do ongoing needs assessment and resources to plan for those needs.

Minister Duncan asked what the ratios are as to provincial grant portion versus municipal funding portion. Board member Sharon Armstrong stated that she was part of a task force in the 90s where a formula was developed. In her region, Head Quarters (Service to Region) is 100% provincially funded, Materials are funded 50/50, and Open Hours (Salaries/Benefits) are funded 20% provincially and 80 % municipally. There is some variance between systems.

- The formula has remained the same and funding has not kept up. This is particularly true with salaries and benefits. Systems are spending from January but sometimes do not know what they can spend until September.
- Adequate funding for SILS is required.
- Funding for visionary resources. For one system it may be an art exhibit within the library, for another an employment kiosk. Libraries require the means to determine their community needs and what they want their library to be.

Minister Duncan pointed out Steven's comment about libraries meeting community needs.

President Allen pointed out that local fundraising in the way of community donations fell short this past year due to COVID restrictions.

- Two or three years ago the Ministry initiated a sector plan for libraries. SLTA and library regions want to make sure they can support the plan. As well, what are the plans of the Ministry going forward? Donna Johnson ED stated that Rory Jensen AAD has met with Provincial Library Alison Hopkins and library directors to get the plan going again. Board member Dennis Taylor pointed out that we know COVID has affected and slowed planning. SLTA would like to be a part of the process.

Minister Duncan reiterated that it has been an interesting year with COVID restrictions. He looks forward to meeting with people in person and touring facilities. He thanks libraries for their flexibility in difficult times and for meeting the needs of their communities. He is hoping our libraries will be well used by school youth over the summer to help them get back up to speed from lost classroom time before returning to classrooms in September.

There was a brief discussion about the cost of online services, which have skyrocketed due to COVID. Libraries have incurred significant extra costs. Minister Duncan pointed out the purchasing power we have when we act as one and wondered about negotiating with companies with one combined purchasing power. Donna Johnson ED stated it is possible to access a larger volume. Rory

Jensen AAD is on the Sector Efficiency Task Force. Donna will ask that he get this item on the agenda. SLTA would appreciate feedback.

President Allen stated the importance of libraries to a lot of people. He thanks everyone for their attendance today.

Minister Duncan also thanked everyone for their time and commitment to libraries in Saskatchewan.