



**SASKATCHEWAN  
LIBRARY  
TRUSTEES'  
ASSOCIATION**

**BRIEF  
TO  
HONOURABLE DON MORGAN  
2015**

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***Libraries are a Gift to the People That  
Lasts for a Lifetime***

## **Introduction**

The Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association (SLTA) extends its gratitude to the Government of Saskatchewan for the opportunity to prepare and present this Minister's Brief, and for the support shown by this Government for Public Libraries.

Libraries have the potential to help our citizens become more productive and move Saskatchewan forward. We need to continue working towards revitalizing and modernizing our provincial library system. The SLTA will continue to promote libraries in the coming year. We welcome the opportunity to continue to help achieve government objectives and to provide services to library users in Saskatchewan.

## **Background**

There are over 300 public libraries located throughout Saskatchewan. User access is free. 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.

Municipal public libraries serve Regina and Saskatoon. The seven regional library systems in Saskatchewan include Chinook, Lakeland, Palliser, Parkland, Southeast, Wapiti and Wheatland. The northern part of the province is served by the Paskisimon Nuyeháh Library.

Our libraries are the public face of our communities and our province. Saskatchewan libraries reach out to communities and provide a variety of information, resources, 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 easier access to information.

Because of our significant and important presence in rural and urban Saskatchewan, libraries are a logical medium to deliver services to users in Saskatchewan. We have included two addendums to this brief. The first highlights examples of the value of libraries for citizens in Saskatchewan. The second highlights Saskatchewan library success stories.

## **Current Status**

Saskatchewan libraries are connected worldwide, twenty-four hours a day every day, and accessible to every person in Saskatchewan.

Libraries play a significant role in helping the Province achieve some of their stated goals, including:

- **Improving Student Achievement through Enhanced Programming**
- **Supporting Newcomers**
- **Technological Innovation and Digital Literacy**
- **Literacy and Skill Development**

The libraries of Saskatchewan provide an essential resource to help the Minister and the Saskatchewan Government attain its goal on leading the nation in graduation rates, while at the same time reducing the gap in education for First Nations and Métis students. The library system of Saskatchewan is within easy reach of First Nations users. Our libraries are deeply committed to providing literacy programs for all children throughout their lives, from birth to adulthood.

Additionally, our libraries are open during the summer and provide a wealth of programs and services for children to continue learning while away from school.

Our libraries have proven their value to users who want to improve their English language skills. We hear constantly from new Canadians that their first stop upon arriving to Saskatchewan was the public library. Newcomers are familiar with libraries in their country of origin and find our local libraries to be a helpful settlement resource.

Those who speak English as an additional language are always grateful for our libraries- not only for English instruction, but also for the assistance of volunteers in finding a job, achieving citizenship, enrolling in school, and obtaining a driver's license.

Saskatchewan's libraries are changing. Once seen as places only to store books, libraries are now seen by Saskatchewan people as information centers. Today our libraries are places where citizens go to find vital information and improve their digital literacy skills.

In countries like Canada, literacy is often taken for granted. But there are many Saskatchewan residents who struggle every day with these basic skills. Literacy in Saskatchewan is a high priority. According to the Southeast Regional Library, only 52 per cent of our province's population over the age of 16 reads "at or above the level determined to be essential for living and working in a modern society."

Working to improve literacy rates and reading levels is vital in order to ensure the continued growth and success of our province, and Saskatchewan's libraries will continue to do so. As our population increases, so does the use of our libraries. Each year thousands of people seek out Saskatchewan libraries to read, access technology and improve life skills. As our province grows, investing in libraries continues to be a wise and effective use of taxpayer dollars.

### **Library Use During Challenging Economic Times**

The SLTA is aware of and acknowledges the current economic challenges the Government is facing.

However, it is during these times economic difficulty that essential services such as libraries are needed more than ever.

As the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries noted at the onset of the 2008 recession, "There is significant evidence to demonstrate that libraries experience an increase of use of up to 20 percent during an economic downturn." As the economy changes, more people seek employment, complete their education or upgrade their skills. These people rely on public libraries for vital information on job opportunities, career planning and training, small business management resources, literacy programs, computer skills development, computer usage, and supports for newcomers and students.

Additionally, families and individuals facing economic difficulties access the public library's collection of books, databases, DVD's, magazines and newspapers as a source of affordable entertainment.

A study by the Washington State Library in 2009 followed a trend in the United States during the economic recession at that time. The study found that more people relied on their public libraries during times of economic difficulty. The study underscored the importance of public libraries during periods in which the economy declines and unemployment rises. People were inundating libraries throughout the United States, using computers to apply for jobs, file for unemployment, and access other resources.

A news release published by the Toronto Public Library noted that 2009 was the busiest and best year the library had ever seen. The increase in use was attributed to newly renovated branches, free access to culture and recreation, free wireless service at all branches, as well as the economic downturn.

Throughout the downturn, the library responded to the increased demand by expanding job and career resources, launching a new website section to support job seekers, and actively promoted its services to Toronto residents.

While Saskatchewan's present challenges are nowhere near as extreme as the 2008 recession, these examples highlight the need for libraries during periods of economic difficulty. Given that Saskatchewan is a fragment of North American society, we can reasonably expect that library use in the province would follow these same trends.

The SLTA remains confident Saskatchewan will overcome any budget difficulties and continue to grow and prosper. However, we simply cannot afford to overlook our libraries during this time.

## **Recommendations**

As we are facing economic challenges as a province, the SLTA is suggesting that with some modest funding we can continue to work at achieving government mandated goals and provision of services to the people of Saskatchewan. Taking that into consideration we respectfully request the Provincial Government to consider the following:

1. We request the Provincial Government provide a minimum of 1.2 million dollars to assume full responsibility for the cost of SILS.

## **With Gratitude**

The SLTA appreciates the opportunity to present this brief. We thank Minister Morgan for his efforts and the results we know he will achieve.

## **Appendix – Library Success Stories**

### **Library Moves to Action in Response to Community Disaster**

As you are aware the southeast part of Saskatchewan went through the great flood of 2014! The communities of Carnduff, Carievale, Alida, Storthoaks, Glen Ewen and Gainsborough all suffered great loss of personal property, loss of their personal security and wariness of Mother Nature! To date hardships are still being felt in the Village of Gainsborough some four and a half months later! The heavy rains started Friday, June 27, 2014 and continued through Monday and Tuesday of the next week. All told Gainsborough community received ten inches of rain. The Village of Gainsborough had mandatory evacuation as the Gainsborough Creek flooded the village from the south and the Gainsborough Creek flooded the houses north of highway #18.

As the waters rose in and around Gainsborough, Carnduff and Carievale had dozens of volunteers come down and help with sandbagging to save houses and property. Although some were saved, most were lost as basements were flooded and the main street was vacant with ripples of water running everywhere. Huge hoses and pumps were started to help hold the tide of water under control but to no avail. The waters of the once calm, meandering creek swirled and churned over fields and roads and the look of devastation everywhere was unreal!

As this devastation was unfolding and the chaos was everywhere, there was salvation in sight. The Carnduff Education Complex is the Emergency Measures building and this proved to be the eating, sleeping and relaxing place for the evacuated peoples. The Carnduff Integrated Branch Library is housed in the Carnduff Education Complex and acting librarian Carol Vanstone and Chairperson Elizabeth Henger jumped to action making our library a place of sanctuary! Here the people could use the computers to keep in touch with family and friends, tables and chairs were removed from the library to accommodate people who needed a place to sit and eat and relax. Crafts, pictures, the television set and the DVDs were all made available for the many families with children. This helped the displaced children resume some sort of normalcy amongst all the happenings. Before the flood, Carnduff Integrated Library staff and board trustees were planning a fund raiser in the form of a BBQ for Monday, June 30th. The food purchased for this fundraiser and all the donated puffed wheat and rice krispie cake was donated to the kitchen preparing food for all the evacuees and volunteers who helped in any way possible. The library extended their open hours to fill the needs of the people. The staff of the library lent a hand where needed whether in the food preparation, donation of food stuffs, a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on. The Red Cross held office in the library at times to take care of the needs of the communities.

The Carnduff Integrated Branch Library and staff played an intricate role in the recovery process of the great flood of 2014. There are too many stories to relay but the fact is that our library opened its doors and the hearts to so many to help those in dire need.

Carnduff Public Library, Southeast Regional Library

### **A Grateful Patron**

Hi,

I hope I'm not being a bother but I wanted to send a thank you for your page  
<http://www.pnls.lib.sk.ca/board-information-and-resources-financial-resources.html>.

I am working on opening my bakery (a lifelong dream finally coming to fruition) and since it will pretty much be only me at the beginning, I have been trying to get a firm grasp on the basics of accounting. Your page was a big help and I really appreciate you sharing the information.

I also found this page helpful <http://www.ignitespot.com/resource-center-basic-accounting>.

It has some great basic accounting tools and since I didn't see it already listed on your page, I thought I would pass it along so you could take a look.

Best,

Melissa Owens

PNLS

### **A Patron in Need**

A long-time patron of the Lashburn Library was losing her sight and asked the librarian about eBooks and audiobooks and other ways to access material. Aside from being a regular library user, she was active in the community and was feeling isolated and less engaged than she was used to being. Another patron was a newcomer who wanted to improve her English skills. The librarian introduced the two with the suggestion that they could converse and the newcomer could read to the patron with the print disability. The library helped make a connection between two community members and found a way to help them help each other.

Lashburn Library, Lakeland Library Region

### **Libraries Contribute to Literacy and Education**

The Goodsoil Library got the following feedback from a local kindergarten teacher, demonstrating the contribution that public libraries can make to literacy and education. "Thank you so much to the Goodsoil Public Library! The Kindergarten class loved their story hour! They were so excited about the books you gave them. They didn't want to put them down."

Goodsoil Library, Lakeland Library Region

### **A Library Committed to Its Patrons**

RPL continues to be committed to its patrons, and to the Regina community. In 2014 we had over 1.4 million visits to our branches and 1.3 million visitors to our website. Over 2 million books, DVDs, CDs and e-resources were borrowed, and 128,503 people participated in the 6,391 programs we offered.

To assist our patrons, RPL installed self-check machines at Central Library and the Central Children's Library in 2014. We now have self-check machines in many of our branches, and by the end of 2014, almost half of all checkouts were made on these machines. This self-service model is prevalent in large public libraries, and strengthens RPL's ability to ensure patron privacy, as well as minimize routine service line ups.

Library staff is also helping the public by responding to questions on a variety of subjects. In a typical week, RPL staff responds to 5,300 in-person questions, 950 telephone inquiries, 245 email, electronic questions, and real-time chat sessions.

RPL is also responding to community demand for library services by increasing our hours of service. In 2014 we focused on improving Sunday open hours. Since 2009, hours of service to the public have increased by 11 per cent.

Regina Public Library