



**SASKATCHEWAN
LIBRARY
TRUSTEES'
ASSOCIATION**

**BRIEF
TO
HONOURABLE Gordon
Wyant
2018**

*The only thing that you absolutely have to know is the
location of the library.*

- Albert Einstein

Introduction

Comprised of over 300 service points, in communities large and small, Saskatchewan's public libraries collectively support the literacy and lifelong learning needs of 1.1 million Saskatchewan residents.

"...to be the best place in Canada – to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family and to build a life." is the vision for the Government of Saskatchewan – a vision that is wholeheartedly supported by Saskatchewan's public libraries. Now, more than ever, libraries play a critical role in the social, educational, cultural and economic success of Saskatchewan communities. Our libraries are an essential investment in the future of our communities and are essential drivers of success in school preparedness, reading readiness, economic and employment success, and social equity. Our public libraries are a vital link for every resident and every community ensuring success of all people of Saskatchewan, regardless of location or background - our Provincial Public Library System ensures that all residents of Saskatchewan have access to library services with one library card for all Saskatchewan public libraries. Perhaps there is no better undeniable proof of the value of Saskatchewan libraries, than the fervent public support as witnessed in the spring 2017.

Public libraries are cognizant of government mandated programs and continue work to achieve government policies and objectives as best they can.

The Challenges

Our public libraries face many challenges. All Saskatchewan residents deserve access to a library with programming relevant to its community, accessible services and current resources, and staff that is engaged with the community.

The influx of immigrants, the downturn in the economy, literacy and technology challenges, as well as the positive affirmation of libraries by the general public, has brought more interest and an increase in use to Saskatchewan libraries. Although the increase in usage is very welcome, adequate funds must be provided to meet the increased demand placed on libraries.

Inflation, collective agreements, training, travel costs (many of our regions serve geographical areas with small and sometimes isolated communities), and more have accrued additional costs to our libraries. **These costs have not been met by current government grants.** These costs have been met by additional municipal levies, staff layoffs, reduction of staff, and reduction of services to patrons.

Of concern recently is that in some regions municipalities are refusing further increases.

The Reality

Our libraries are struggling. Over the last several years provincial funding for our libraries has remained mostly stagnant. Our costs continue to rise and demand for library services has escalated in these difficult and uncertain economic times.

The chart below demonstrates over a 12 year period, excluding SILS funding in 2008 and 2009, library funding has averaged 1.25% while our cost of living has averaged 2.1%. **Our library funding compared to the Provincial Cost of Living has averaged -0.9%.**

Year	Total Public Library Funding	Year Over Year Library Funding % Change	Saskatchewan Year Over Year Cost of Living %	Library Funding vs Saskatchewan Cost of Living %	Library Funding vs Saskatchewan Cost of Living Dollars	Comments
2006	\$7,114,000					
2007	\$7,267,000	2.1%	2.8%	-0.7%	\$49,413	
2008	\$8,361,000	13.1%	3.3%	9.8%	-\$711,044	See Footnote 1
2009	\$10,086,000	17.1%	1.0%	16.1%	-\$1,346,365	See Footnote 1
2010	\$10,086,000	0.0%	1.4%	-1.4%	\$141,204	
2011	\$10,577,000	4.6%	2.8%	1.8%	-\$185,799	
2012	\$10,296,000	-2.7%	1.6%	-4.3%	\$457,901	
2013	\$11,008,000	6.5%	1.5%	5.0%	-\$511,508	
2014	\$11,090,000	0.7%	2.4%	-1.7%	\$182,798	
2015	\$11,090,000	0.0%	1.6%	-1.6%	\$177,440	
2016	\$11,090,000	0.0%	1.1%	-1.1%	\$121,990	
2017	\$11,090.00	0.0%	3.7%	-3.7%	\$410,330	

1. In 2005, the library systems around the province started coming together to discuss the concept and feasibility of a shared provincial software system. These discussions unfolded over the next few years. Then, in October of 2008, the provincial government committed \$5.2 million over four years to a single integrated library system to launch the project. This included \$2 million in one-time funding to the SILS Consortium to purchase software, and \$1.3 million to assist library boards with purchasing local computers. The remaining \$1.9 million was used to support the implementation of the software system throughout the province. Regional, municipal and northern library system boards have always been key contributors to the SILS project.

Recommendation

SLTA acknowledges the financial constraints the Government is currently facing. Therefore, SLTA respectfully requests the Provincial Government to consider the following:

- We request the Provincial Government provide an inflationary catch up of 6% to allow us to maintain existing services.

Conclusion

The SLTA appreciates the opportunity to present this brief to the Minister. We are grateful for the Government's continued support of libraries in the Province.

References

Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Finance, January 22, 2016, Saskatchewan Consumer Price Index, from <http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/stats/cpi/cpihistoricaltables.pdf>.

A. Hopkins, Provincial Librarian, Provincial Library and Literacy Office (personal communication, August 25, 2016).

D. Taylor, Chair, Lakeland Regional Library, (personal communication, November 25, 2016).

G. Beuhler, SLTA Representative, Chinook Library Region, (personal communication, November 6, 2016).

Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Finance, November, 2017, Saskatchewan Consumer Price Index, from <http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/stats/consumer2017/cpiNovember17.pdf>.