



# Friends of the Regina Public Library

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Honourable Don Morgan  
Minister of Education  
Room 361, Legislative Building,  
2405 Legislative Drive,  
Regina, SK, Canada, S4S 0B3

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Re: **Supporting Saskatchewan Libraries**

The Friends of the Regina Public Library are writing this letter to provide support to the initiatives outlined by the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association in their recent brief to you.

FRPL's mandate includes: ensuring equitable access to library programs and services to meet the needs of diverse communities; promoting the maintenance and enhancement of Regina Public Library programs and services including those that support literacy and provide cultural opportunities for all; and actively promoting the value and strengths of library services throughout the community. As a result we take a keen interest in the proposals included in the SLTA brief.

In the SLTA document requests are made for additional support for a number of initiatives.

- Developing "a long-term plan for the update, revitalization, modernization of the provincial library system".
- Increasing summer and evening programming aimed at improving the literacy rate of First Nations patrons.
- Technology to assist with language instruction for new Canadians, i.e. "Technological equipment supplied to all libraries to aid and enable English as an Additional Language programming."
- Resources for staff and volunteers to carry out EAL training, i.e. "An in-service program designed to upgrade provincial library staff to the 21<sup>st</sup> century library, and the role and function staff will play."
- "Provide funding for a common baseline technology for all libraries to have available for patrons."
- Promoting literacy in reading and using technology through ... "Providing funding for a career choice program for adolescents (available on-line) available from every library in Saskatchewan."
- "Provide funding for expanded programming and hours for staff targeting literacy initiatives."
- Telling the stories of Saskatchewan libraries.

The SLTA brief also requests that to maintain the present level of service, libraries receive "an annual minimum operational grant of inflation plus 2%."

FRPL can well support the intent of these recommendations. Looking beyond the borders of the City of Regina, which is our normal purview, everyone will benefit from improving library services throughout the province. It is important to have the financial resources for library materials of all kinds, information technology and library programs, as well as adequate funding for the high quality and well-appreciated staff that are fundamental to library services. Additional financial resources for libraries would be money well spent, and FRPL would support the SLTA's request for this funding.

Public access to information is a cornerstone of democracy. Libraries have an important role to play in being open spaces that all members of the public can access and obtain information and resources of many types free of charge.

Responding to the will of Regina residents as was expressed and brought to public attention ten years ago through FRPL, the Regina Public Library has made the effort to maintain library branches in inner city areas, continuing to make these services available at walkable sites serving many residents of low income communities.

In Regina and other Saskatchewan communities, libraries have collections and programming that honour and provide learning opportunities for First Nations and Métis people and share cultural understanding with others. Library materials and programming in these areas is important and additional funding to support this would be beneficial. The SLTA suggestion to have summer and evening literacy programs available, based on local identification of needs and input, would provide an additional resource outside the regular school system that can enhance literacy rates.

Libraries are important resources to New Canadians. Last year in our statement to Regina City Council on the proposed Regina Public Library budget for 2013, FRPL made the following comment.

“As our province expands and benefits from newcomers from around the world there is an increased demand for library resources in many languages and to some extent for programs such as literacy training. The RPL has recently prepared a pamphlet in many languages and additional programming, for which it should be commended. While the RPL is managing these items within its current budget, to support additional initiatives in this area, perhaps the provincial government could be approached for additional funding for RPL and indeed for all Saskatchewan libraries to help make this province the most welcoming place for newcomers.”

Outreach services across the province provide access to library resources for those unable to visit the library in person and provide adaptive equipment, library materials and services for people with disabilities. In our brief to Regina City Council last year, we noted that Outreach Services are very important in enabling access for people with specific needs for reading or accessing library materials. Since the Premier has a goal of making Saskatchewan the best place to be for people with disabilities – this is another area that could be considered for receiving additional provincial support.

We would appreciate hearing back from you concerning these suggestions about the ways in which libraries can be supported.

Sincerely,

Joanne Havelock  
Chair, Friends of the Regina Public Library

## Who We Are

Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) formed in December 2003 in response to the threatened closure of several Regina Public Library Branches: Connaught Library, Glen Elm Library, Prince of Wales Library, the Prairie History Room located at the Central Library and the Dunlop Art Gallery with galleries located at Sherwood Library and at Central Library.

FRPL organized and worked with people from all walks of life, and from communities throughout the City to help citizens show their support for their libraries. A petition with over 26,000 signatures helped convince the Regina Public Library Board to rescind its plans for closures. It helped convince the Regina City Council that the citizens of Regina value their libraries and would support much needed, but modest, increases in the mill rate to provide the Library with additional funding.

FRPL continues to play an important role in:

- monitoring the RPL Board activities and working with the Board to reach mutual goals,
- supporting efforts by RPL and other organizations to improve libraries,
- involving the public in having their say on libraries; and
- celebrating the Libraries and our community.

Vision: A strong library system meeting community and patron's needs that is accessible to all

Mission: In an equitable and public manner, through ongoing dialogue between the public and decision-makers, support the maintenance and development of a strong set of diverse and accessible library products, services and programs that meet the needs of all Regina residents.

Goals:

1. To promote transparent, accountable, democratic decision-making within and about the Regina Public Library.
2. To promote equitable access to library services to meet the needs of diverse communities.
3. To promote the maintenance and enhancement of RPL programs and services including those that support literacy and provide cultural opportunities for all.
4. To actively promote the value of library services throughout the community.
5. To create a vibrant FRPL organization.