



Friends of the Regina Public Library

2042 Garnet Street, Regina, SK. S4T 2Z6

www.friendsofrpl.ca

frpl@sasktel.net

306-535-9570

March 22, 2021

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

E-mail: minister.edu@gov.sk.ca

Re: **Libraries in the 2021-22 provincial budget**

The Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) are writing to express our continuing support for not only maintaining but enhancing the funding for all libraries in the provincial budget.

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

Libraries provide services to the public in general, and also provide specific programming and resources relating to Indigenous people, people with disabilities and newcomers. This past year they have been important in providing safe services to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regina Public Library continues to lead the way in providing a cultural hub, starting with the Dunlop Art Gallery and the Film Theatre in the 1960s, and expanding into media and other creative opportunities. With the services they provide, libraries are a unifying component in the growing diversity of our province.

Libraries are also key in preserving and sharing important historical resources such as those available through the Prairie History Room in the Regina Public Library, the Local History Room in the Saskatoon Public Library, and the local history collections in our province's local libraries.

FRPL's mandate relates to the Regina Public Library, which has a municipal tax base that enables it to provide a wide range of services free of charge to the City's residents, but for whom provincial funding in a number of areas is also essential.

In FRPL, we are also aware of the important role played by libraries in other cities and towns -- especially in the smaller communities where, with more funding, those libraries could play an even greater role as learning centers.

The Saskatchewan Integrated Library Service and the one-card system are great Saskatchewan innovations that allow libraries to share resources efficiently. These innovations must continue to receive adequate funding for staff, technology and the transportation of library materials.

In 2003, in Regina, there was a proposal to save on funding by closing 3 library branches and other services. Deeply concerned citizens of Regina responded with public meetings and gatherings, a task force, a legal challenge, and a petition with over 26,000 signatures presented to City Council. After review, these branches and library services were kept open, with one being relocated to a new building, maintaining library branches in inner city areas at walkable locations serving many residents of low-income communities.

This same public support for libraries spontaneously erupted in the spring of 2017 when provincial library funding was cut, with an apparent misunderstanding of the role libraries play in our communities. Thousands of people in locations throughout the province acted to reverse the cuts. Many participated in a Facebook page; two petitions were circulated with one being presented in the provincial Legislature; letters were sent to MLAs and to news editors; and a Drop Everything and Read event was held in over 85 locations around the Province. These events helped inform provincial political leaders of the critically important roles played by Saskatchewan's libraries, and of the value placed on these services by people of all backgrounds. The funds have since been restored and have continued at about the same level.

In the Fall of 2018, the province began a review of the provincial library services and in the Winter of 2019 released the ***Report of Saskatchewan Public Libraries Engagement Survey***. What has the province done to implement this review? Is there a public report of the full review available?

We hope that the 2021-22 provincial budget maintains funding for all libraries in the province, and believe that this funding could be strengthened this year and, in the years ahead. Money spent on libraries is, unquestionably, money well spent.

We look forward to your response and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this topic with you in person.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Havelock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joanne Havelock
Chair, Friends of the Regina Public Library

cc. Hon. Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan
cc. Ryan Meili, Saskatchewan NDP, Leader of the Opposition
cc. Sandra Masters, Mayor of Regina
cc. Sean Quinlan, Chair of the Regina Public Library Board
cc. Jeff Barber, RPL Library Director

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 and providing input to the activities and governance of the Regina Public Library system
- 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.