



SLA

SASKATCHEWAN LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

For Saskatchewan Libraries

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries are fundamental to the educational, cultural, recreational, economic, and political well-being of Saskatchewan communities. They are community hubs relied on and enjoyed by many people.

But not everyone recognizes the extent of the value libraries bring to our province, making advocacy more important now than ever before. Advocacy on behalf of all Saskatchewan libraries is one of SLA's core values. SLA's Advocacy & Development Committee has put together this Advocacy Toolkit, modelled after the [Manitoba Library Association's Provincial Election Toolkit 2023](#), in the hope that these resources will enable libraries to better advocate for themselves.

The toolkit includes: a list of priorities for which to consider advocating, a letter template that can be customized for your elected official, questions to consider asking candidates during an election campaign, a timeline of how our provincial budget is created, and a list of further resources.

While many of the toolkit pieces are geared toward advocacy during an election, they can be customized for use at any time. The information provided within this toolkit is intended to reflect and be useful to all types of libraries in the province: public, academic, special, and school.

You are encouraged to make use of this toolkit in your library's advocacy efforts. Materials can be customized and distributed as needed.

This toolkit is a living document that the Committee hopes to add to and update in the future. If you have any suggestions for additional pieces or resources to be included, please email your ideas to info@saskla.ca.

Happy advocating!



PRIORITIES

These priorities are what SLA encourages you to consider when advocating for libraries to your elected officials. These priorities belong to everyone!

- 1** Increase provincial operating funds for public libraries in Saskatchewan, and ensure funds allocated to school and academic libraries are used to their full potential.
- 2** Increase awareness of the important and varied range of work libraries do, such as social services, financial and health literacy, makerspaces, and more. Many of these services come without an increase in funding.
- 3** Support all libraries and library workers. From librarians to student pages, staff across the province are trained to curate collections and provide valuable services to patrons of all ages and backgrounds.

Vote for candidates who:

- Understand the work and services of Saskatchewan's libraries, including public, school, academic, and special libraries. This includes an understanding that we are not just places that house books, but have become programming and learning hubs of all kinds.
- Understand the role libraries play in intellectual freedom, human rights, and embracing diversity.
- Value the expertise and experience of library professionals and staff.

Vote for candidates with knowledge of library services. Libraries of all kinds support their communities by:

- Providing access to information and technology, including access to a variety in collections (books, movies, databases) and a variety of interests, no matter the perspective;
- Supporting all types of literacy and learning for people of all ages; and,
- Providing the community a gathering space in public libraries, and providing students a safe space to study, learn, and grow their skills in school and academic libraries.



LETTER / EMAIL TEMPLATE

Please note that this template is only a suggestion. Customization is encouraged.

Dear [name of candidate or elected official],

I write as a [user/board member/staff member] of [name of your library] to learn your views about library services in Saskatchewan.

All types of libraries in this province — whether public, school, academic, or special libraries — serve as important educational, social, economic, and cultural hubs in the communities they serve. Libraries provide:

- Access to credible information for informed decision-making,
- Access to literature, art, and music for personal enjoyment and enrichment,
- Diverse programming for life-long learning and community building, and
- Supports and programs that increase literacy.

In my community, the [name of your library] is meeting the needs of [students/residents/patrons] by [highlight some of the unique work or programs your library is doing].

I am very interested to learn your thoughts on library services in [insert your community] and across Saskatchewan. I have attached some questions about your views on libraries, and ask that you please respond to them. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[your name]



QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

In any given election campaign, you may find that you will have the opportunity to ask questions of a party canvasser, a candidate for your riding, or even the leader of a political party. Some example questions on libraries that you may ask, or may use as a starting base for your own questions, include:

- How will [you / your party / your candidate] strengthen library services in Saskatchewan?
- What is your knowledge of the state of public library funding in Saskatchewan?
- What will [you / your party / your candidate] do to ensure that all Saskatchewan residents have access to fully funded public libraries?
- What is your vision for library service in our community?
- What library services [do you / does your party / does your candidate] plan to help improve or establish in this coming term?
- How will [you / your party / your candidate] help to ensure that all library board trustees are trained and equipped to handle their duties?
- How will [you / your party / your candidate] strengthen school libraries to support student outcomes?
- How will [you / your party / your candidate] support public and school libraries that face organized pressure campaigns to censor or ban materials from their library collections?

Take note of the responses that you receive, and be sure to thank the person for their answers and for their time. Even if your questions do not immediately yield answers that you feel are comprehensive, or if the person that you are talking to does not have answers immediately available, remember that leaders, candidates and canvassers pay close attention to the issues being raised in conversation by people they encounter – especially if they hear the same issues come up multiple times or in multiple places.



THE MAKINGS OF A PROVINCIAL BUDGET *

The work of many libraries in Saskatchewan is determined by the provincial budget, including public, school, and academic libraries. The process of how that budget gets built, however, isn't something many of us spend a lot of time thinking about. As an advocate for libraries in Saskatchewan, it is a process the Saskatchewan Library Association pays close attention to. To influence the budget and lobby on behalf of libraries, the opportunity to influence requires the right timing (if decisions have already been made, there is no opportunity to influence them) and an understanding of the fiscal priorities and pressures that are competing for public funds.

Here's a quick primer on how the province's budget is created and approved.

The Treasury Board is a cabinet committee like no other. Made of cabinet ministers and backbench MLAs, its members are appointed directly by the Premier and made official through an Order in Council. Its mandate is detailed in The Financial Administration Act, 1993, unlike other committees whose work may be more ad hoc. Given its mandate and responsibility for the province's purse strings, the decisions made by the Treasury Board impact every government priority, program, and service.

TREASURY BOARD MEMBERSHIP

As of August 29th, 2023, the membership of the Treasury Board was appointed as follows by the Premier Scott Moe:

Hon. Donna Harpauer, Chairperson
Hon. Don McMorris, Vice-Chairperson
Hon. Paul Merriman
Hon. Lori Carr
Hon. Tim McLeod
Daryl Harrison, MLA
Jim Lemaigre, MLA

TIMELINE

SUMMER

Ministry staff begin building the budget by reviewing existing budgets and government commitments. They also examine economic forecasts from the chartered banks and forecasts for this, such as oil, natural gas, and potash – the natural resources that drive provincial revenues – to understand how much money they have to spend.



EARLY FALL

The Treasury Board issues a call to all government ministries to submit their estimates. The call for estimates usually includes a “spending target,” which is how much each ministry is being asked to increase or decrease their overall budget.

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

All government ministries submit their proposed budget to the Treasury Board. The Board often asks ministers to find additional opportunities to cut spending and puts additional pressure on ministers to successfully justify their spending requests.

As a result, the overall framework for the budget is usually set by the end of the calendar year.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY

Cabinet finalizes and approves the budget. A few weeks later, government caucus finalizes the budget. While it is rare for the budget to change based on caucus feedback at this time, government members must be prepared to address the budget and support the decisions made when speaking to stakeholders, including constituents.

MARCH

The provincial budget is tabled in the legislature. It is then debated and typically passed in May. Key stakeholders are invited by the ministers to attend the tabling of the budget, include those who speak for various libraries.

* Adapted from an article in Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Bulletin Winter 2022 Issue Unknown (Winter 2022). The makings of a provincial budget. Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Bulletin, Vol 89 (No. 2), 22-23. https://www.stf.sk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/stf-001215a_20221206_rh_web_11.pdf. Used with permission.



FURTHER RESOURCES

The following resources consist of research that may be useful in building your library advocacy.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Bradley, C. (2021). The Canadian Index of Wellbeing: A Better Way to Assess and Communicate the Value of Libraries. Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research, 16(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v16i2.6440>

General Economic Impact | Libraries Matter. Retrieved March 19, 2024, from <https://www.ala.org/tools/research/librariesmatter/taxonomy/term/131>

The List: Canadian Public Library Impact Studies. Library Research Network. (n.d.). Retrieved March 19, 2024, from <https://libraryresearchnetwork.org/the-list-canadian-public-library-impact-studies/>

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Editor, W. (n.d.-a). Advocating for Change. Canadian School Libraries Journal. Retrieved March 19, 2024, from <https://journal.canadianschoollibraries.ca/advocating-for-change/>

Editor, W. (n.d.-b). Manitoba School Library Association's Social Media Advocacy Campaigns. Canadian School Libraries Journal. Retrieved March 19, 2024, from <https://journal.canadianschoollibraries.ca/manitoba-school-library-associations-social-media-advocacy-campaigns/>

More Research – Canadian School Libraries Research Archive. (n.d.). Retrieved March 19, 2024, from <https://researcharchive.canadianschoollibraries.ca/more-research/>

Staff, K. (2018). Why school librarians matter: What years of research tell us. Kappan Online. <https://kappanonline.org/lance-kachel-school-librarians-matter-years-research/>

Hammond, Anita J. (2017). The Impact of School Library Programs on Student Achievement. The Medium, Spring 2017. https://www.learnask.net/uploads/9/5/3/6/95368874/the_impact_of_school_library_programs_on_student_achievement.pdf



ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Soria, Fransen, J., & Nackerud, S. (2017). Beyond Books: The Extended Academic Benefits of Library Use for First-Year College Students. *College & Research Libraries*, 78(1), 8–22.

<https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.78.1.8>

Seale, & Mirza, R. (2020). The Coin of Love and Virtue: Academic Libraries and Value in a Global Pandemic. *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 6, 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.33137/cjal-rcbu.v6.34457>

SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Whitmell, & Goodyear, S. (2020). Legislative and Parliamentary Libraries in Canada: Two Hundred Years of Service, Support and Information. *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 43(1), 3–.

Hartfiel, Sadera, G., Treadway, V., Lawrence, C., & Tudor Edwards, R. (2021). A clinical librarian in a hospital critical care unit may generate a positive return on investment. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 38(2), 97–112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hir.12332>

OTHER RESOURCES

Alex-Nmecha, & Horsfall, M. N. (2019). Reading Culture, Benefits, and the Role of libraries in the 21st century. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1–11.

York. (2017). Calculating the value of libraries: some of the benefits come with a hard price tag, the others are invaluable. *New Hampshire Business Review*, 39(13), 18–.



MEMBER FEEDBACK

Your feedback is important. We invite you to share your thoughts with us at Info@saskla.ca.

