

# Saskatchewan Public Library Governance

## ...In a Nutshell

*...in a Nutshell* is a quick reference guide on public library governance in Saskatchewan and the library boards' fundamental responsibilities for achieving effective leadership and sound governance. Find more information about Trustee Development on the Saskatchewan Library Trustees (SLTA) website: [www.slta.ca](http://www.slta.ca).

## Definitions

**A public library board** is a governing board with the authority to make policy and to govern the library's affairs within the framework of Saskatchewan's Public Libraries Act, 1996.

**Governing** is different from managing. A board doesn't run an organization but ensures that it is properly run.

**Governance** is the entire framework set by the board to direct the organization. It identifies how a board will conduct business, how power will be divided and delegated and what processes will be set up to achieve accountability.



Over 2,500 Saskatchewan citizens volunteer to sit on public library boards. Thank you for helping make your libraries and communities stronger!



# Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association

## Character Traits for a Successful Board Member

“Today’s public library trustee needs to be politically and economically savvy, socially conscious, a quick learner, and a good team player. The truly successful trustee will also be enthusiastic about what libraries can do for the lifelong learning of the citizens they serve” (Moore, 2010).



## Three Steps to Good Governance

### What is your job?

- Act honestly and in good faith and in the best interests of the library. The interests of the library take precedence over your personal interests or those of any other group with which you are associated.
- Know what it is that you need to achieve.
- Know where and how to get the resources you need.
- Be an advocate for public libraries.

### How are you going to do it?

- Build a solid governance framework that includes bylaws, policy and an achievable plan that is based on why you exist: your mission.
- Attend meetings and show commitment to board activities.
- Contribute skills, knowledge and experience when appropriate.
- Listen respectfully to other points of view.
- Participate in organizational decision-making.
- Represent the library to the public and to private industry, and to government.
- Educate yourself about the needs of the people you serve.

### How are you going to keep track of it?

- Assess what you have accomplished and report progress regularly.

# Powers and Responsibilities of the Board

## Responsibilities of a local library board:

- Interpret and implement regional library board policy.
- Formulate policy respecting the development and operation of the local library in co-operation with the regional board.
- Advise the municipality concerning adequate library facilities.
- Provide local library board training.
- Undertake promotion and public relations campaigns in the community.
- Take responsibility for special library programming.
- Establish standards for hours of service and types of service, in conjunction with the regional library board.
- Provide recommendations to the regional board and director about relevant programs and materials.
- Report to council on a regular basis.
- Advise regional board with regards to staffing.
- Hold an annual meeting.
- Perform duties delegated by the regional library board.

*The Public Libraries Act, 1996, SS 1996, c.P-39.2, s.40.*

## Powers of a municipal library board, regional library board, the northern library system board, or a northern community public library board:

- Acquire, rent or lease and maintain any necessary lands or buildings.
- Sell, exchange, lease or otherwise dispose of any of its lands or buildings.
- Borrow for operating or equipment purchasing.
- Establish and maintain a capital fund.
- Invest any part of the capital fund.
- Accept and act as a trustee for any gift, grant, device or bequest.
- Enter into any agreements for the purposes of performing the duties and powers conferred on it by the Act.
- Do anything that it considers necessary or incidental to carrying out its duties.

*The Public Libraries Act, 1996, SS 1996, c.P-39.2, s.82.*



## Power to appoint the library director

The Public Libraries Act, 1996 gives municipal library boards, regional library boards and the northern system board the right to appoint a person who has a degree in library or information science from a university accredited by the American Library Association as Library Director.

## Conflict of interest

As the activities of a library shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members, a library trustee has both a legal and moral duty to disclose any personal interest in business dealings undertaken by the library and must deal fairly, avoiding any transaction not in the best interests of the organization.

# Saskatchewan's Public Library Governance Framework

Saskatchewan residents receive public library services through a province-wide network of libraries created by The Public Libraries Act, 1996. The framework in Saskatchewan includes the following types of public library boards:

- **Municipal Boards** for Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon.
- **Regional Boards** for each of the seven regions (Chinook, Lakeland, Palliser, Parkland, Southeast, Wapiti, Wheatland).
- **Local Library Boards** for each branch library within the regional system.
- **Northern System Board** for the Pahkisimon Nuye?áh Library System.
- **Northern Community Public Library Boards** for each public library in the north.

## Board Membership

**Municipal boards** include the mayor and one member of council plus 6-8 members appointed by council.

**Regional boards** include one member appointed by each municipality for each 5,000 of its population, or fraction thereof. Regional board members also serve on local library boards.

**Local library boards** are appointed by local municipal council.

**The Northern library system** board includes members appointed by school advisory boards, Indian bands, northern community public library boards, regional colleges and post-secondary institutions. Northern community public library boards are joint venture boards and members are appointed according to those agreements.



## Who Does What: The Board or the Staff?

Issue	Boards	Staff
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>		
<b>Existing local and provincial laws</b>	Knows local and provincial laws	Knows local and provincial laws
<b>Library reporting</b>	<p><b>Local Library Board</b> Prepares, submits annual reports to regional board</p> <p><b>Northern Community Library Board</b> Prepares, submits annual reports to Joint Venture Agreement Partners</p> <p><b>Regional Library Board</b> Prepares, submits annual reports to municipal council and provincial government</p> <p><b>Municipal Library Board</b> Prepares, submits annual reports to municipal council and provincial government</p> <p><b>Northern Library System Board</b> Prepares, submits annual reports to provincial government</p>	<p><b>Branch Librarian/ Director</b> Prepares, submits annual reports to respective board</p> <p><b>Directors (Regional, Municipal, Northern Library System) or Northern Member Library Administrator</b> Prepares, submits annual reports to respective board</p>

*Saskatchewan libraries are diverse and not all boards function the same way.*

Issue	Boards	Staff
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>		
<b>Accountability</b>	<p><b>Local Library Board</b> Municipal council and regional library board</p> <p><b>Northern Community Library Board</b> Band council and provincial government</p> <p><b>Regional Library Board</b> Municipal council and provincial government</p> <p><b>Municipal Library Board</b> Municipal council and provincial government</p> <p><b>Northern Library System Board</b> Provincial government</p>	<p><b>Branch Librarian/ Director</b> Regional, municipal director</p> <p><b>Directors (Regional, Municipal, Northern Library System) or Northern Member Library Administrator</b> Regional, municipal or northern board</p>
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>		
<b>Board orientation</b>	<p>Board chair supports and participates in planning and delivery</p> <p>Board members engage and participate</p>	<p>Supports and facilitates planning and delivery</p>
<b>Board performance</b>	<p>Evaluates regularly</p>	<p>Contributes input to evaluation process</p>

Issue	Boards	Staff
<b>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>Understanding the community</b>	Understands local issues, the implication of community demographics and the contributions of community groups	Understands local issues, the implication of community demographics and the contributions of community groups
<b>Community relationship building</b>	Builds a strong relationship with municipal council  Maintains a dialogue with the community  Demonstrates accountability to the community	Promotes library services in the community  Forges relationships with community groups and leaders
<b>Library's role in the community</b>	Establishes the library as an essential community service  Builds community pride in the library  Advocates library's role in the community	Establishes the library as an essential community service  Builds community pride in the library
<b>PLANNING</b>		
<b>Community needs for library service</b>	Assesses needs	Assists board to assess and understand needs
<b>Library goals and objectives</b>	Develops and approves	Advises board and facilitates in development
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	Evaluates library performance annually or more often if appropriate  Revises plan accordingly	Provides necessary data to demonstrate progress  Participates in ongoing evaluation

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<b>PLANNING</b>		
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	<p>Evaluates library performance annually or more often if appropriate</p> <p>Revises plan accordingly</p>	<p>Provides necessary data to demonstrate progress</p> <p>Participates in ongoing evaluation</p>
<b>FINANCE</b>		
<b>Annual budget</b>	<p><b>Local Library Board</b> Prepares local budget for local needs</p> <p><b>All Other Boards</b> Analyzes preliminary budget and proposes necessary changes</p> <p>Officially adopts budget</p> <p>Presents budget to council in accordance with municipal or band budget policy and procedures</p>	<p>Consults with municipal or band staff and advises board on municipal /band budget policy (excluding Northern System Director)</p>
<b>Financial control measures</b>	<p>Secures its own bank account and directs the disbursement of library funds</p> <p>Ensures safe financial control measures are in place to expend budget with due diligence and in accordance with board policies</p>	<p>Monitors the budget</p> <p>Identifies and addresses problems</p>



Issue	Boards	Staff
<b>PERSONNEL</b>		
<b>Staff selection</b>	<p><b>Local Library Board</b> Advises Regional Board</p> <p><b>Northern Community Library Board</b> Hires Northern Public Library Administrator</p> <p><b>Regional Library Board</b> Hires Regional Library Director</p> <p><b>Municipal Library Board</b> Hires Municipal Library Director</p> <p><b>Northern Library System Board</b> Hires Northern System Director</p>	Hires staff
<b>Board-Staff relationship</b>	Builds a strong relationship that recognizes board authority and respects staff expertise	Builds a strong relationship that recognizes board authority and respects staff expertise
<b>Salary scales and union contracts</b>	<p><b>Northern Community Library Boards (excluding Local Library Board)</b> Approves</p> <p><b>All Other Boards</b> Board representative is present in negotiations</p>	Negotiates salary and working conditions for staff including union contracts as applicable
<b>Grievances</b>	Ensures that appropriate steps are in place to handle any grievances that have not been satisfactorily resolved by the library's grievance procedures	Handles all grievances for branch staff and keeps the board informed

## To Be An Effective Board Member

1. Know your board's policy statement, general goals and bylaws, making sure they are up-to-date, relevant and workable.
2. Be open to continuous learning.
3. Recognize that only the board has the authority to act on behalf of the library; individual board members have no authority to act on their own.
4. Share in the responsibility for the effective functioning of the board by ensuring full discussion of issues and making reasoned decisions.
5. Build your knowledge and understanding of the broader library community.
6. Read your trustee handbook.
7. Attend board meetings, arriving prepared, having read minutes and reports that were circulated.
8. Report regularly to your municipal council or sponsoring body.
9. Be aware of community and sponsoring bodies' needs by seeking out information.
10. Attend regional and provincial trustee meetings and workshops.

## Board Ethics

**Confidentiality:** Board members should realize that what is discussed in meeting stays within the meeting. Transparency does not mean the public is privy to the discussion in the meeting. The public needs to know about the decisions the Board makes-not the discussion.

**Support:** Individual Board members are obligated to support the decisions of the Board in public. Within the confines of the meeting, debate and disagreement is appropriate but once the Board makes a decision, all of the Board must support the decision. If in all conscience, you cannot support the decision, resignation is appropriate.

**Unity:** Any Board must speak with one voice and that voice is vested in the Board Chair. Individual Board members ought not to speak on behalf of the Board or direct staff in the operation of their duties.

**Professionalism:** Board members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Petty grievances, personal likes and dislikes have no place in the Board room.

## How to prepare for your library board meetings:

- Be well-informed on issues and agenda items in advance of meetings.
- Keep the discussion focussed on the agenda topics.
- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and the goal: decision-making, planning, task assignment.
- Staying on schedule is everyone's responsibility; honour time limits.
- Be positive, non-judgmental and open to new ideas.
- Everyone participates; no one dominates.
- Have fun!



## Power to Oversee the Library's Finances

### Financial oversight involves:

- Understanding the source of funding for your library.
- Understanding the implications of a budget and a financial report.
- Recognizing if the allocation of monies aligns with board priorities.
- Ensuring that financial policies are in place to control receiving, processing and disbursing money, to ensure fiscally-sound budgeting, to manage risks, and to limit liability to the library and the board.

### Financial oversight does not mean:

- Simply approving a budget or financial report.
- Approving a cheque register.
- Challenging a miniscule amount on a budget line.

## Power to Make Policy

Policies provide the necessary framework for all of the operations and priorities of the library and allow for a smooth transition from old to new boards. Library policies cover the following five areas:

### Advocacy

Promotional items and image

### Finance

Vehicle, Spending limits

### Programs

Circulation, Collection development

### Personnel

Harassment, Staff training

### Policy

Constitutional bylaws

Policies must be framed within the limitations set out in government legislation, regulations and other agreements.

## Public Trust

“Public trust is the obligation placed on trustees to maintain, preserve, further develop and expand cultural resources and to ensure that cultural activity remains in the public domain to the benefit of this and future generations.” (Paquet, 1987)



## Use of Public Libraries to Be Free

The basic library services outlined in The Public Libraries Regulations, 1996, and provided free of charge to all residents of Saskatchewan are:

- A level of service determined locally at the community level.
- The development of library collections according to the needs and interests of communities.
- The development of programs that meet local needs for cultural, economic, educational and recreational information.

A board is NOT permitted to charge for:

- Admission to the library.
- Using library materials in the library.
- Reserving or borrowing circulating materials specified in Regulations.

## Legislation

The Public Libraries Act, 1996, SS 1996, P-39.2.

<http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/English/Statutes/Statutes/P39-2.pdf>

The Public Libraries Regulations, 1996, RRS 1996.

<http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/English/Regulations/Regulations/P39-2R1.pdf>

## Resources

- Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia Trustee Handbook, 2004.
- Moore, Mary Y. The Successful Library Trustee Handbook. Chicago: American Library Association, 2010.
- Paquet, Marion A., Rory Ralston and Donna Cardinal. A Handbook for cultural trustees: a guide to the role, responsibilities and functions of boards of trustees of cultural organizations in Canada. Waterloo: University of Waterloo Press, 1987.

## Acknowledgements

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