

Presentation to City Council's Executive Policy Committee

Monday, March 14, 2011

By Rita Burgess, Chair, Winnipeg Public Library Board

Re: 2011 City of Winnipeg Operating Budget Estimates

Good Morning Mr. Mayor and members of Executive Policy Committee. As the Chair of the Winnipeg Public Library Board, I am pleased to be here this morning to speak on behalf of the Board in regards to the 2011 City of Winnipeg operating budget.

Thank you for including in the preliminary budget the Board's operating grant request of \$88,128.00. It is greatly appreciated!

The Winnipeg Public Library Board's mission is **"To provide insightful and informed advice and recommendations to the City of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Public Library system, and build community support"**. As a Board we have set out a number of core strategies within our Four year strategic plan, to ensure our mission is met.

Within that Strategic Plan, one of the core strategies is **to continue to advocate for a permanent increases to the Library's material budget** in order to ensure that the Library keeps pace with providing access to the resources its users want.

In 2009 Winnipeg ranked 25th out of 33 in average materials expenditure per capita, in the Canadian Urban Public Libraries' ranking. We are pleased to advise that Winnipeg was one of only 13 urban systems that showed an "increase" in funding in 2009. This is thanks to the forward thinking of the Mayor and Council who recognized the importance of funding materials for our library system, even during challenging economic times! For this we are appreciative. We cannot take our foot off the gas pedal now though. It is critically important to reinvest in libraries for sustainability.

"People love their libraries, but libraries cannot live on love alone!"

We are respectfully requesting that EPC accept the recommendation from the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services for a \$25,000 increase to the Libraries budget, as a permanent addition to the libraries materials budget.

This funding is needed to support four key areas of the libraries collections.

Adult Literacy

The Library has an important role in literacy development, not only for children, but also for adults. According to a report from the Canadian Council of Learning, 44% of our citizens in Winnipeg have a low literacy level, 2 or below. The 2 level is considered a Grade 8 level, where adults can understand and interpret basic text that is simple and clearly laid out. In a society that is becoming more complex, and in an economy that is increasingly competitive, literacy skills are critical. In fact, in a knowledge-based economy, literacy is the skill base for labour productivity. Literacy = better education = jobs = economic benefits for our city

Seniors

The population of Winnipeg is aging. Our Public Library service has many excellent services and materials in place to meet the needs of this demographic, such as large print books. There are ever increasing demands for more from our aging baby boomers.

Aboriginal Communities

In the report and action plan completed by the Winnipeg Public Library Aboriginal Services task force, it was noted that more Aboriginal material should be added to the Library collection. This will assist in literacy programming in our libraries, both for children and adults.

E-Books and other Electronic Resources

It would be important to note at this time, that when we speak of materials, it is not just books. Materials include electronic and non-print materials, which together make up approx 25% of the materials budget. E-Books/E-Audio Book checkouts increased 99% over 2009 and 364 % over 2008.

A wonderful resource that can be utilized by using your library card is free online Databases. The Internet has certainly become the go-to place to get information on a wide range of questions, issues or concerns. A growing concern, though, is the accuracy and safety of sites accessed, especially when it comes to our children, teens or for medical concerns. From the Library website we are able to access information for Teens on Health and Wellness; consumer health information; and even the latest consumer reports. There are databases that elementary school aged children can access to help find information on a wide range of topics.

And a wonderful site called "TumbleBooks" reads books aloud, for all ages, so that people who have more of a challenge reading, can learn and enjoy books of every genre. If you are a fan of Robert Munsch, you can hear him bring such classics as "The Paper Bag Princess" to life! Online database usage increased almost 100% in one year!

Finally,

On behalf of the Library Board, I would like to speak to **increasing the hours of operation at the Millennium Library**. The Standing Committee, due to a tie vote, has sent without recommendation the February 24, 2010 Council motion, to EPC and Council.

Increasing hours of access to libraries and the service and programs they offer benefits all citizens. It helps to provide an avenue for keeping kids off the street by providing programs and homework help, it provides new Canadians with access to resources and a place to seek out information and services that are invaluable in becoming part of our City, it ensures that those most in need have access to computers to prepare résumés and seek employment opportunities so they can participate fully in society, and it provides all citizens with programs and materials to meet their leisure and quality of life needs.... to name but a few benefits of library service.

In closing,

We hope that you will consider and support the Hybrid Model recommendation made in the administrative report of February 28, 2011. This will allow for the extension of hours of service at Millennium Library for the maximum benefit of the public. Thank you for consideration of this issue.

We are encouraged with how efficiently our city has come through the economic challenges of the past few years and know that many challenges lie ahead for the Mayor and Council in 2011. Libraries are a core service to the viability of our city and we thank you so very much for ensuring that the necessary funding is in place to ensure it remains effective.

Thank you for your time and attention to this vital matter!