

City Council Approves Additional \$100,000 for Library Materials

Winnipeg City Council has approved \$100,000 in additional funding for Winnipeg Public Library's 2004 materials budget, enabling the purchase of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 additional items this year. "City Council faced many demands and had difficult choices to make. We are very pleased they've included this additional funding for library materials," said Mike Cook, Chair of the Winnipeg Public Library Board.

Cook thanked members of the City's Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services, and Executive Policy Committee for recommending the added funding, following presentations to each committee by the Board in March. The increase brings Winnipeg Public Library's materials budget to \$2.4 million this year, the first increase in funding for materials in more than 10 years.

"The materials budget for the Winnipeg Public Library system has been flatlined for more than a decade," Cook said. "Each year we add fewer new books to our collection, which is both ageing and shrinking."

The Library Board had requested \$465,750 for each of the next three years, which would have raised the City's per capita spending on library materials from \$3.73 per year to \$5.98. Based on its materials spending per capita, Winnipeg ranked 25th among Canadian cities.

Cook said the Library Board will continue its focus on building awareness among civic and provincial leaders, and the public, of the impact that reduced funding has on services for library users. Cook shared statistics that dramatically illustrate the impact the flatlined materials budget has had.

Books for young people

- Ten years ago the average cost of a children's book was \$11.00. That cost is now \$17.00, due to increased printing and paper costs, plus inflation and a devalued Canadian dollar compared with a decade ago.
- The Library's buying power for new children's books has been reduced by 35% over the past decade, which means fewer books each year for Winnipeg's young people to read.
- In 1993 the Library was able to purchase more than 27,000 new children's books, compared with 17,500 last year. That's nearly 9,500 fewer books compared with a decade ago. Yet reading skills are more important now than ever.

- The impact is even greater on children's paperbacks, which have seen a 64% increase in costs over the past decade, from an average of \$3.65 per paperback to today's average cost of \$6.00.
- Winnipeg Public Library purchased approximately 16,500 children's paperbacks in 1993, compared with about 10,000 last year.

Books for adults

- Ten years ago the average cost of an adult book was \$17.00; today, the average cost is \$25.00. This represents a 32% reduction in the Library's buying power over the past decade.



Brenda Norquay, the Library's Collection Development Librarian, will be putting the additional funds to very good use.

- Winnipeg Public Library was able to buy 51,600 new adult books in 1993, compared with 35,000 in 2003.
- The average cost of adult paperbacks has skyrocketed over the past decade, from an average of \$5.00 in 1993 to \$9.00 today, an 80% increase.
- The Library purchased approximately 15,600 new adult paperbacks in 1993, compared with about 8,700 in 2003.

• Marlene Klassen, Vice-Chair, Winnipeg Public Library Board