Winnipeg Public Library Board
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WPLB Response to Proposed Budget Cut to Grant

In the notes attached to the City's 2006 Operating budget, under the heading of Fiscal Restraint, is the item "Reduction to Winnipeg Library Board Grant. The explanation says, "saves approximately $28,000. Board's previous year's surplus approx. $52,000."

Mr. Mayor, I am here on behalf of the Winnipeg Public Library Board to express our surprise and disappointment at this proposed cut of approximately 42% to the Board's grant.

The Winnipeg Public Library Board is an advisory, volunteer board that is mandated to:

- make recommendations on library policy and budget
- make recommendations on administrative matters with significant policy or service implications for the library system
- make recommendations on the development of long-range plans for, and public involvement in, the library system
- develop fundraising programs for the benefit of the Library system

The Board does this in consultation with the Manager of Library Services, and reports to City Council's Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services yearly.

The Board feels that is has delivered excellent results and is being penalized for having managed the annual grant from the city prudently and with due diligence. We do not view the money as a surplus but rather as a reserve fund. We have this reserve fund due to prudent management and a focus on longer term planning. $28,000 may not sound like much in the City's overall budget, but it will make a big difference in our ability to continue to ensure we carry out our mandate to support the library to meet the needs of the citizens of Winnipeg. If this cut is approved, at the end of 2006, based on the Board's planned budget, we will be bereft of funds.

Each year we dip into our reserve funds. As last year was a planning year, we did not utilize the reserve as much as we normally would have done in the past. The Board's goals for 2005 were to continue as advocates of the library, to focus on the recruitment and training of Board members, and to look at the role of the Library Foundation after the Millennium Library project. Since 2001, we have provided $42,000 in support to the Library Foundation. The Board established the Library Foundation in 1996 to provide the Library with a source of major

funding in addition to the allocations received from government. The Board is currently in discussion with the Foundation to establish what financial support they require for the future. Another activity last year was to revise the Library Board's regulations and procedures.

The Board's major focus for 2006 is development and implementation of strategic planning including the development of guidelines to meet our mandate as articulated by the City. The strategic plan will map out our plans for the future, for which there will be funding implications.

Past, Present and Future Activities of the WPLB

- The Board established a Community Outreach Committee in 2004 and we are expanding our community outreach program. Going out into the community is one of our main objectives. Currently we provide an annual grant to a library branch to reach segments of the community not currently using library services.
- We are now distributing information for a new community outreach program offering Language and Literacy grants to community groups or agencies to improve literacy in tandem with public library branches.
- Another strategic plan objective is to review the recruitment process for new members for the Board and Library Advisory Committees. This will entail research and the establishment of a task force.
- The Board developed a user survey that was administered by Library Advisory Committee members. As follow-up, a committee will be reviewing the results.
- Included in our strategic planning is the reaching out to the public and other groups such as the business community for more involvement in the library system.
- The Board has supported the library by commissioning major studies such as one on library materials and another on facilities. This year the Board will conduct another extensive study on the materials selection process. This project will include a comprehensive review of the library's materials selection practices vis a vis the demographics of the city e.g. ESL, multicultural and aboriginal needs.
- The Board also is a sponsor or co-sponsor of programs such as the Writer-in Residence and activities associated with the Summer Reading Program.
- The WPLB has also sponsored attendance at training conferences for staff and Board members as well as recognition of staff.
- The Board continues its role of advocacy, for example advocating for an increase in the Library's materials budget. Also, at the Provincial level, in several meetings with the Honourable Eric Robinson and his staff, we have been seeking the removal of the cap on the Provincial grant to Winnipeg Public Library. We have reiterated this request during the

Province's current Public Library Review. The Library Board has also been contacting MPs to ensure that Canada Post's special Library Book Rate be maintained.

These are but a few of the projects that Board members have been involved in or have initiated.

In addition to the activities that directly impact the library, we have operating expenses. These include the support of the office located in the Millennium library, computer and furniture upgrades, and hourly parking rates that have tripled. The Board also requires the support of a part-time administrative assistant. The amount of work required of the administrative assistant has risen due to strategic planning and the passion of the Board members to participate in activities to support the Winnipeg Public Library System. The Board is composed of a group of dedicated volunteers who gladly give of their time and energy to support the library system.

If the City wants an active and engaged Board then this is the cost, and it is a modest cost. We strongly request that the grant to the Winnipeg Public Library Board not be reduced. The Board, in pursuing its mandate, has the best interests of the library and our fellow citizens at heart.

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## A loaf of bread for $1.32
## A litre of gasoline for $0.57
## A Patricia Cornwell paperback for $5.00

## *Wouldn't it be great if we could buy these goods <u>today</u> at 1996 prices?*

Unfortunately, we can't. Yet the materials budget for Winnipeg Public Libraries has been flatlined for more than a decade – with the exception of *one-time* $100,000 grants over each of the past two years.

So how does Winnipeg Public Library continue to stock its shelves with materials using 1996 budget dollars? The reality is, we continue to slip further behind each year with the amount of materials our libraries are able to purchase. We need *today's dollars* to address the current and future needs of the thousands of Winnipeg children, teens, adults and seniors who regularly use our library services.

***How much we need***

The gap has grown wider over time. In 2001 Winnipeg Public Library Board commissioned a report to find out just how great that gap is. The report compared and analyzed materials budgets of large urban public libraries in Canada. Based on the findings, the Board asked the Standing Committee on Protection and Community Services in 2002 to increase the Library's materials budget by 75 cents per capita, or $465,750 per year for the next three years. That increase was never approved.

We were encouraged by the two *one-time* $100,000 increases, however **<u>we need an increase to our base materials budget. And so the Winnipeg Public Library Board is requesting a *$400,000* increase to our materials budget. This amount will allow us to regain some of the ground lost over the past decade.</u>**

***Why we need an increase to our base materials funding***

- More than 424,000 or 68% of Winnipeg's citizens hold library cards.
- Winnipeg spends $3.90 per capita on library materials when compared with the national average of $5.04 per capita.

- When compared with other large Canadian cities, Winnipeg in 2004 ranked 30th in its expenditure per capita on materials.
- The findings of the 2001 report commissioned by the WPLB indicated that the Winnipeg Public Library was falling behind most of the large library systems across the country.

***Why we need more funding***

- A flatlined materials budget over the past decade means that each year we have been adding fewer new books to the collection, which is both ageing and shrinking.
- Although new items are added, many are withdrawn due to being outdated, worn or damaged. We added approximately 175,000 items last year – and withdrew 139,000 items.
- Buying power for new children's books has been reduced by 35% over the past decade which means fewer books for our people to read.
- The current average price of a paperback book will be $11 by July 2006 – compared with $5 ten years ago.
- A decade ago the average cost of an adult book was $17 – compared with $25 today. That's a significant reduction in buying power.
- Fewer books mean longer waiting times for books and materials loaned from the Winnipeg Public Library.

***What library users want***

- The acclaimed Millennium Library is a world-class award winning community facility offering enhanced services and programs. It is a key component of downtown Winnipeg's revitalization, reflecting a future-thinking city. Average daily attendance has increased by 74%, computer bookings are up about 51%, and patron registrations have increased by 110%.
- Library users increasingly need and ask for a more diverse range of materials. Preliminary results of Library Advisory Committee surveys completed in late 2005 indicate users' concerns about library collections. The recurring message is that they want more books, and more materials in other formats. Over 50% of the respondents visit libraries once a week.
- Winnipeg's public library system is faced with changing needs and increasing demands of an increasingly diverse population that includes aging baby boomers, immigrants, people with disabilities and the largest Aboriginal population of any Canadian city.

***The impact that libraries have on our community***

- Public libraries bolster the economic prosperity of their communities. They contribute to the economic well-being of local businesses; they improve the market worth of the communities.
- The library has an important role in literacy development not only for children but also for adults.

- Literacy and numeracy are the building blocks for an informed, literate citizenry.
- Libraries are fundamental to building and maintaining the community capacity that enables economic development.
- Crime levels have been linked to literacy levels. For example, members of the Winnipeg legal community estimate an illiteracy rate of 80% among inmates at Headingley Correctional Centre.
- Libraries and library services are among features that attract new citizens to Winnipeg.
- The public library has a key role in ensuring access to the electronic world of information, by providing both computer technology and electronic resources.
- The public library system is a vital component of the City's infrastructure for the future, "fostering and supporting a learning culture in a knowledge-based economy" as Professor Wendy Newman stated in an excellent report on public libraries.

***Library staff do an outstanding job***

The Library Board wishes to acknowledge that staff members are doing an outstanding job of meeting library users' needs within the current budget, providing an excellent return on investment for Winnipeggers.

***The Library Board acknowledges the challenges faced by City Council***

The Winnipeg Public Library Board thanks all Councillors, who in their deliberations face many competing demands for funding and have difficult choices to make.

Our Board – which comprises volunteer citizens committed to ensuring the citizens of Winnipeg receive the library services they need and want – respectfully seeks City Council's support in **bringing our baseline libraries materials budget to an appropriate level to meet today's needs**.

***A vibrant, modern library system adds to the greatness of the city and leaves a footprint for the future.***

Dianne Zuk, Chair