Last year City Council gave Winnipeg Public Libraries an extra $100,000 to buy new materials

This 16¢ per capita increase was the first in more than a decade

Here's how we spent the extra funds:

More than 390,000 of Winnipeg's citizens hold library cards – a higher percentage than in many Canadian cities. Library users increasingly need and ask for a more diverse range of materials, so we allocated the additional funds as follows:

- $42,000 to online resources for adults and children
- $28,000 or approximately $1,500 per branch, for an average purchase of 60 additional books per branch
- $30,000 for central services provided by the Millennium and St. Boniface libraries, which support all branches.

Why we need your continued support

- Even with increased materials funding in 2004, we budget less than $4 per person on materials for Winnipeg Public Library each year. In 2003 among large public libraries the national average was $5.20.

- The impact of a materials budget being flatlined for over a decade is taking its toll. Each year we have been adding fewer new books to our collection, which is both ageing and shrinking.

- We added approximately 178,000 items in total last year – and withdrew 138,000 items that were outdated, worn or damaged.

- A decade ago, the average cost of an adult book was $17 – compared with $25 today. That's a 47% reduction in buying power.

- A decade ago, we were able to purchase approximately 27,000 new children's items annually, compared with approximately 20,000 last year.

How much we need

This year the Standing Committee has recommended an increase of $200,000, which represents an increase of 32 cents per capita. We hope EPC would support that recommendation.

* PCS

How citizens of Winnipeg will benefit

- Public libraries provide an environment that fosters literacy and a love of reading and lifelong learning.

- 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 their communities, and they offer Winnipeggers highly skilled and often highly technical jobs in an automated environment. Libraries and library services are among features that attract new citizens to Winnipeg.

- Public libraries are well positioned to make information in many formats available and accessible to all Winnipeggers.

- 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 access to information that public libraries offer, regardless of race, class, income, age or gender, assists in supporting and encouraging democracy and improves the quality of citizen's lives.

In closing

The Board wants to acknowledge that staff members are doing an outstanding job of meeting the needs of 390,000 card holders within the confines of the current budget. Considering the economic benefits and potential return on investment, public libraries provide excellent value to the citizens of Winnipeg.

The Winnipeg Public Library Board recognizes that City Council faces many demands for funding and has difficult choices to make. We thank Councillors for approving the added funding for materials in 2004, and ask for your continued support in 2005.

Prepared by The Winnipeg Public Library Board
For the City of Winnipeg's Executive Policy Committee: Special Meeting, March 14, 2005