

**Government and Public Libraries Forum  
Finding our Common Ground  
October 19 and 20, 2009**

**SUMMARY OF FORUM RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS**

**INTRODUCTION**

On October 19 and 20, 2009, the Provincial Library and Literacy Office of the Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan hosted the first-ever Government and Public Libraries Forum to allow senior provincial government officials and public library leaders, in Saskatchewan, to begin a dialogue on shared leadership and engagement in a planning process.

The purpose of the Forum was to increase mutual understanding, to determine the extent to which government and public libraries have common goals, and to establish working relationships that could help build a future of shared action. The Government and Public Libraries Forum was an attempt to open a dialogue and to build on successes while planning for the future.

Approximately 130 people attended the Forum including about 40 government, 70 library and 20 panellists who may have been from government, library, community or the private sector.

**SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS**

Elder **Mike Pinay** opened the Forum with a prayer. Minister of Education and Deputy Premier, the Honourable Ken Krawetz, welcomed delegates to the Forum and wished them success in their planning process. Greetings were also received from Bev Dubois, President of the Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association and Barbara Kelly, President of the Saskatchewan Library Association.

The keynote address was delivered by **Martin Gomez**, City Librarian of the Los Angeles Public Library, a library that serves a population of 4 million people. Mr. Gomez spoke about three major research reports that he was involved in preparing for the Urban Libraries Council. *The Engaged Library* showed that libraries are no longer passive repositories for books, outposts of culture and places of quiet decorum. The new library is active, responsive to community and an agent for change. *Making Cities Stronger*, which investigated the economic value of public libraries to communities and found that libraries provide communities with a return on investment that far exceeds their cost in

many ways: generating wealth, developing the workforce, providing early literacy services that contribute to long-term economic success, and supporting and serving as catalysts for business development. The third report, *Welcome Stranger*, looked at the ways that libraries support immigration, including building cultural knowledge and English language capability, as well as creating connections to their new community while staying connected to their home country.

A second keynote address was provided by **Maureen Woods**, currently the Executive Director from The Alberta Library, and formerly the Provincial Librarian in both British Columbia and Saskatchewan. She talked to delegates about the outcomes of the B.C. experience in hosting a similar forum between government and public libraries that was the culmination of a consultation to assess the key issues facing communities and the key areas of development for the government. The intersection of these two circles represented the opportunity for libraries to develop and for government to fulfill its aspirations. The result was 15 million dollars to fund a plan that was a practical vision for public libraries that supported equitable access to information for all citizens of B.C. and made effective use of provincial dollars. The B.C. Dialogue found linkages between public libraries and health, education, literacy, and immigration as well as a role for libraries in disseminating government information. One of her points that really caught people's attention was that the library enjoys a 96% approval rating from the Canadian public and how valuable that might be to government.

In the evening **Punch Jackson** spoke about an Alberta MLA's report which also yielded significant benefits to Alberta public libraries. Mr. Jackson noted that funding for libraries followed a lengthy and detailed effort to work with government and to ensure that decision-makers were aware of the needs and the potential of public libraries. The point that caught people's attention was that Members of the Legislative Assembly had embarked on a process to visit a number of local libraries and that these visits significantly strengthened their support for public libraries.

In addition to the keynote and guest speakers, twenty people, most from Saskatchewan and many employed by either government or libraries, served as panellists. The panellists were asked to participate in, and contribute information to, workshops to explore one of the five theme areas:

- Community Economic Development;
- First Nations and Métis Success;
- Literacy Services;
- Rural Services; and
- Services to New Immigrants

## FORUM PROCESS

Delegates to the Forum were provided with background information regarding government's goals and priorities, as well as on the role, scope and accomplishments of public libraries.

The first day of the Forum was designed as an information day in which panellists were asked to talk about their experience in partnerships in the five themes areas. Panellists presented information from the perspective of government, libraries, communities, service providers, and the private sector. The intent of the panels was to stimulate ideas around the key concepts such as partnership, communication, and addressing community needs. At the end of the second workshop delegates were asked to write down the ideas that panellists had presented that were important to remember, or come back to as they thought about actions in the day 2 workshops.

On the second day of the Forum, delegates were asked to begin contributing their ideas based on the information presented the day before, and their knowledge and experience. They were asked to consider what goals libraries and government have in common and then to consider ideas for concrete action that could be taken to enable government and public libraries to work together on the common goals.

Delegates identified a strategic fit between government and public libraries in the following areas:

- Quality of life and security through services and communities.
- Services to specific target groups: immigrants, seniors, children.
- Ensuring citizens have essential skills to participate in the work force.
- Support for business, especially for new, smaller start-ups.
- Increase community capacity for development and well-being, help sustain rural communities.
- Government has a need to disseminate information and libraries have an ability to deliver information to the public.

Delegates, with the help of panellists from the previous day, began exploring ways to ensure that partnerships between government and libraries could be further developed and actions that government and libraries might undertake together. Some of the key ideas from the day two workshops follow.

## ACTION IDEAS RELATED TO EACH THEME

Actions in this section relate to public libraries acting as a group or on their own. The Ministry identified is a potential partner but no work has yet been done to start these partnerships so it cannot be assumed that they are willing or that they are the right partner.

### Literacy

Action For Public Libraries	Ministry Partner
Open discussions to establish roles for libraries in workplace and essential skills or GED online programs and create a pilot with libraries.	Advanced Education, Employment and Labour (AEEL)
Use Kids First model to identify need for literacy services of libraries	Social Services, Health, Corrections
Purposeful assessment of community needs, funding, learner's abilities and resources.	Education
Implement Time to Read province-wide in partnership with schools	Education
Develop an inventory of services, skills, and expertise and showcase through libraries	Provincial Library & Literacy Office (PLLO)
Aboriginal Literacy Coordinator	PLLO
Explore public libraries role in promoting health literacy, e.g. through potential partnerships and new models (i.e. integrated facility)	PLLO Health
Aboriginal Literacy programs, including family literacy	PLLO
Deliver some government programs such as ABE/GED by providing space and computer access	AEEL
Libraries partner with industry for workplace literacy	None
Work with the communities as partners to determine their needs employing the community development approach – and responding to specific community needs [one size doesn't fit all]	None
Develop a newsletter or other communication tool in public libraries	None

## Rural Services

<b>Action for Public Libraries</b>	<b>Ministry Partner</b>
Discuss ways to enhance relations between municipal councils and local libraries or library systems and develop better understanding of municipal grants to libraries.	Municipal Affairs Education (Provincial Library)
Enhance the electronic library networks to facilitate 2-way conferencing and program delivery using video conferencing, satellite and other technologies, as a medium for program delivery at local libraries. Establish a pilot to demonstrate how libraries deliver on government goals.	Education
Host MLAs at public libraries.	None

## First Nations and Métis Success

<b>Action For Public Libraries</b>	<b>Ministry Partner</b>
Develop strategies and approaches to enhance education and to assist in building relationship between libraries and the federal government.	First Nations and Métis Relations (FNMR)
Roundtable with federal, provincial representatives and publishers, First Nations Councils (and others) toward creating materials in First Nation and Métis languages	FNMR
Improve First Nations and Métis employment resources including services for writing proposals and contracts.	
Public library based mentoring program for Aboriginal youth (see Philadelphia Public Library experience)	PLLO
Replicate this forum at the regional/local level	None
Public libraries investigate Aboriginal Employment Development program to create representative workforce	FNMR
Involve Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal peoples in library boards, library advisory committees, and library programs	None
NORTEP/PNLS partnership to welcome newcomers and families to La Ronge Public Library	None
Public libraries facilitate learning between new immigrants and Aboriginal people to eliminate stereotypes and negative views and to further Indigenous knowledge. Pilot project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role for Aboriginal Elders to educate people about treaties</li> </ul>	FNMR AEEL - Immigration
Public libraries play a role in providing treaty information for non-Aboriginal people	None
Pilot project to have a Teacher in Residence in Saskatoon Public Library – possible project with the school division(s).	None

## Services to New Immigrants

Action	Ministry
Create connections with Labour (AEEL) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate occupational information sheets,</li> <li>• Participate in Business Failure Strike Forces</li> </ul>	Advanced Education, Employment and Labour (AEEL)
Document success stories and models such as the immigration model at Ogema.	
Define a role within the context of the Newcomers' Information Centres being established	AEEL
Develop a relationship with Immigration Services to encourage participation in ministry programs	AEEL

## Community Economic Development

Action	Ministry
Establish a business person in residence program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information for small business</li> <li>• Referrals</li> </ul>	Enterprise Saskatchewan
Community resource audit to better define ability to offer public services.	ES
Contact with Enterprise Regions, municipalities to create partnerships with library regions to work on economic development	ES
Buildings fit with economic development (i.e. retail zones)	ES
Use libraries deliver government services and programs. Libraries could be official government information service centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have libraries involved in government transactions.</li> <li>○ Train library employees on government services, information, organisation and standards.</li> <li>○ Public libraries inform government ministries of programming of interest using Web 2.0 tools.</li> </ul>	ES
Potential to work with the Regional Intersectoral Committees (RICs)	None

## OUTCOMES

Forum delegates, in their evaluations, expressed a high level of satisfaction with the content of the Forum and a desire to see the dialogue continue and lead to establishing some specific actions related to libraries partnering with government. 86% of evaluations received indicated the Forum was valuable or very valuable. One of the clearest themes to emerge from the Forum was that public libraries are more than book delivery systems. Saskatchewan's public libraries see themselves as "community hubs" that are actively engaged in building communities and could be places where information and services from the provincial government could potentially be disseminated. Public libraries also currently play a key role in providing literacy services to the province's citizens, and public library systems have expressed interest in taking on larger roles.

Public library leaders have expressed a desire to move forward on some of the ideas developed at the Forum. Follow-up that is planned will include incorporating action recommendations into Provincial Library and Literacy Office work plans, discussing concepts with the appropriate government agencies and with library board chairs and directors, establishing working groups to further specific project ideas. Ideas might also be incorporated into existing initiatives such as the development of a literacy strategy for the province.

Delegates were also interested in seeing a web site to report on the Government and Public Libraries Forum, for more detailed information about the Forum, and for the complete list of action items. The web site could also be used on an ongoing basis to add updates about current actions, to continue the dialogue, to explore additional possibilities for joint action and to further develop ideas for models or pilot projects.

## RECOMMENDED FOLLOW-UP ACTION

### **Action to Further Develop Relationships Between Government and Public Libraries:**

- Continue communications between government and libraries, as an **ongoing, regular, dialogue** that increases synergies and leads to collaboration and partnerships. Identify a **point person** in each Ministry as a library liaison to pursue relationship building.
- Solidify the connections made by establishing a **working group** that includes representatives from government and libraries to continue the discussions.
- Develop **one concrete action** in each of the theme areas and create pilot projects to begin implementing these ideas and proving sustainability.
- Bring government people in to libraries.
- **Publish a report** about the Forum for participants – library, government and the public – in a printed report or online.

- **Host MLAs** at libraries – develop a list of things to do and say when an MLA visits.
- Conduct **workshops** similar to the Forum for the regional, municipal and northern libraries.
- Share information on **multi-partner agreements**, e.g. fed/prov/municipal/First Nation/Métis
- **Annual follow-up** or feedback, especially success stories.

## Next Steps

Library Directors met on December 11, 2009 and determined that they would like to pursue partnerships, with the appropriate ministries, to undertake activity in six key areas:

### Actions Related to Specific Theme Areas

1. **Electronic Networks** – Enhance the electronic library networks to facilitate two-way conferencing and program delivery using video conferencing, satellite and other technologies. Tie-in with economic development. Work Group Team: Chinook, Pahkisimon Nuyewááh, Palliser.
2. **Immigration** – Define a role within the context of the Newcomers Information Centres being established. Library information, as part of a package for orientation work at regional levels, includes the online tutor project at RPL & Parkland. Work Group Team: Saskatoon, Wheatland, Lakeland, Southeast.
3. **Assessment of Community Needs** – Purposeful assessment of community needs, funding, learner’s abilities and resources, using a community development approach. Look at a broader approach than strictly literacy needs. Work Group Team: Regina, Parkland, Chinook, Saskatoon.
4. **Economic Development** - Contact with Enterprise Regions and municipalities to create partnerships with library regions to work on economic development. Work Group Team: Regina, Parkland, Lakeland, Palliser.
5. **First Nations & Métis Success** – Roundtable with government, publishers, and First Nations councils to address needs and create children’s programs, material & services in First Nations and Métis languages. Work Group Team: Pahkisimon Nuyewááh Library System, Wapiti, Lakeland.
6. **Early Childhood Education** – Develop a partnership to work with government on early learning initiatives. Work Group Team: Saskatoon, Regina, Wheatland, Parkland.

## **Actions to Grow Relationships Between Government and Public Libraries**

### **1. Libraries Deliver Government Services**

- Begin a discussion about a **partnership** between the provincial government and public libraries **to develop capacity for libraries to deliver government information, resources and services.**
- Discussion to include ways for government to take advantage of the public infrastructure that already exists in libraries and what additional supports libraries might need to fulfil this role.

### **2. Continuing the Dialogue**

- Continue communications between government and libraries, as an **ongoing, regular, dialogue** that increases synergies and leads to collaboration and partnerships.
- Identify a **point person** in each Ministry as a library liaison to pursue relationship building.
- Provincial Library & Literacy Office will take responsibility for calling together the **teams** and identifying government contacts who would be most interested in working in the areas identified.