



Manitoba Library Trustees Association

Box 590
Erickson, Manitoba
R0J 0P0

www.mlta.ca
manitobalibrarytrusteesassn@gmail.com

February 5, 2018

Honourable Minister Jeff Wharton
Minister of Municipal Relations
Legislative Building
Room 317-450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Wharton

On behalf of the Manitoba Library Association (MLA), we are writing to express our concern about the recent termination of essential funding to the Manitoba Community Services Council (MCSC) and the possibility that, without provincial funding, the MCSC will cease to exist.

For over 40 years, MLTA has represented the trustees appointed to local public libraries in Manitoba. MLTA's goal is to 'promote and foster the advancement of public library service' and MLTA is committed to the future of Manitoba through effective library policy development. We represent not only library trustees, but the interests of the patrons and supporters of public libraries, through leadership in communications, advocacy and support of trustee education. In the fall of 2017, MLTA, elected to join the Manitoba Library Association, which is currently in transition.

For many years MCSC has been an important partner with the Province and non-profit community organizations. As an arms length granting organization of provincial and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries funding, MCSC plays an important role in promoting the availability of funding to deserving community organizations; including having clear eligibility and assessment guidelines, and involving a multi-faceted volunteer Board of 12 representatives from all parts of the Province.

The proposed change is without adequate notice to MCSC and stakeholders such as the non-profit organizations it serves, and little information has apparently been shared about how and when this funding delivery would be replaced.

We note that in June 2017 the Province announced that it intended to provide municipal funding through a 'single-window application and basket funding model'. We understand that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) advocated for a streamlined approach for its municipal members, and we hope that such a restructuring has been a benefit. We are, however, concerned that such a model is being mandated for grant applications by non-profit community organizations, which are operated significantly differently than municipal councils.

We are confident that MCSC manages the funding it receives very well. The grants provided by MCSC are scrutinized according to well developed guidelines, which are readily available to the

public on its website, and the grants themselves are modest requests for items such as furniture and chairs, computer or office supplies, and in some cases emergency capital projects, totalling \$5,000.00 to \$20,000.00, with grants sometimes exceeding these levels.

Various public libraries in Manitoba have benefited from the assistance provided by MCSC over the years, including (since 2014):

- South Interlake Regional Library \$12,000.00 for equipment and furniture
- Lac du Bonnet Regional Library \$6,000.00 for technological upgrades
- Bibliothèque Allard Library \$12,250.00 computers, and equipment
- Boissevain-Morton Regional Library \$55,000.00 emergency capital roof repairs
- Minnedosa Regional Library \$5,000.00 photocopier
- Russell and District Regional Library \$10,000.00 furniture and equipment
- North Norfolk-MacGregor Library \$5,500.00 computers

In addition to public libraries, MCSC provides similar modest funding to other important non-profit community groups, particularly in rural Manitoba. According to its 2016-2017 Annual Report, MCSC's funding is evenly distributed across the Province, with approximately 50% to Winnipeg organizations, and 50% fairly evenly across rural Manitoba.

I would refer you to the 2016-2017 Annual Report which provides a glimpse of both the impact it has had in the community, and its very modest administrative budget in delivering effective funding. In particular I would refer you to the Chairperson's report, which I think summarizes succinctly the role of MCSC:

"MCSC stands as a unique organization that provides a grant program that is flexible and adaptable to the ever changing needs of the community and economy."

We would urge the government to reconsider its intended termination of essential funding, or at the very least provide a reasonable amount of time for MCSC to obtain alternate administrative funding. Your government should be commended in seeking to consult with constituent organizations and listen to concerns and work collaboratively to come up with appropriate solutions. MCSC has proven to be an effective delivery vehicle for much appreciated provincial funding, and this proposed change not only fails to recognize the efforts of past and present volunteers, but the effectiveness of their operation.

Sincerely,

Andrew Robert, Chair

Cc: Manitoba Library Association