



**Manitoba
Library Association**

Provincial Election Toolkit 2023

Introduction

The Manitoba Library Association (MLA) has created an election toolkit to help engage candidates and the public on the topic of support for public libraries.

It's more important than ever to ensure our elected government officials truly understand the value and importance of Manitoba Libraries!

This toolkit provides the following pieces needed to communicate with candidates:

1. MLA's top priorities for the 2023 provincial election;
2. an email/letter template for contacting candidates;
3. suggested questions to pose to candidates;
4. social media posts to share with your social networks;
5. a list of helpful resources related to the value of public libraries.

Whether you are a library worker or a member of the general public, you are encouraged to customize this information to suit the advocacy needs of your library/library system, and/or to assist your support of Manitoba libraries.

This toolkit can be found on the Manitoba Library Association website at mla.mb.ca.

MLA's toolkit is focused on public libraries and public library services. School libraries are also of pressing interest to Manitobans. Our partners at the Manitoba School Library Association have created the [Advocating For Your School Library guide](#), available from the MSLA website, which contains questions for candidates pertaining to school libraries. We know that topics of public education, and response to the rise in 2SLGBTQIA+ hate are also pertinent topics for MLA's membership. In the appendix of this toolkit, we have provided links to election resources from MSLA, Manitoba Teachers Society, People for Public Education, and the Rainbow Resource Centre.

We encourage you to tailor questions to candidates using a variety of such tools!

Priorities of the Manitoba Library Association

1. Increase Provincial operating funds for public libraries in Manitoba.
2. Establish reliable access to broadband and internet services to improve communication for all Manitobans especially those in rural, and First Nations communities.
3. Support and defend all libraries, librarians, and library workers! Librarians are trained to carefully curate collections that reflect diverse communities of all ages.

Vote for candidates who:

- Truly understand the work and services of Manitoba's libraries.
- Uphold the value of human rights and intellectual freedom, and embrace diversity.
- Value the expertise, knowledge and education of library professionals.

Vote for candidates with a vision and knowledge of public library services:

Public libraries support the communities they serve by:

- providing access to information and technology including access to both variety of books and variety of perspectives
- supporting literacy and learning for people of all ages
- providing the community a gathering space

Templates - Email/Letter to Candidates

These templates are only suggested. Customization is encouraged.

Dear [insert name of candidate],

I write on behalf of [insert name of library or library board, etc.] to commend you for running in this year's provincial election and to learn your views about public library service in [insert name of municipality/community].

Public libraries are long-established as important hubs that serve the intellectual, social, economic, and cultural needs of the communities they serve. Access to information, support for early and life-long literacy, and access to an increasing range of technologies are just some of the ways library service supports our community. In addition to these, [insert name of library] offers [describe unique offers or initiatives, share highlights from your most recent annual report, etc.].

We are very interested to learn your thoughts on public library service in [insert name of community/municipality]. We ask that you take time to review the questions below and respond to us as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
[XXXXXX]

Template for Library Users/Supporters

Dear [insert name of candidate],

I write as a [user/member/supporter] of [insert name of library] to commend you for running in this year's provincial election and to learn your views about public library service in [insert name of municipality/community/riding].

Public libraries are long-established as important hubs that serve the intellectual, social, and cultural needs of the communities they serve. Access to information, support for early and life-long literacy, and access to an increasing range of technologies are just some of the ways library service supports our community. In addition to these, [insert name of library] offers [describe unique offers, initiatives, services, etc. from your library] which is of personal importance to [me/my household/my community].

I am very interested to learn your thoughts on public library service in [insert name of community/municipality/riding]. I ask that you take time to review the questions below and respond to me as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
[XXXXXX]

Questions for Candidates at the Door or Forum

I. Their personal experience with public libraries

Do you have a library card?

How often do you or your family make use of the public library? Which services offered by the library do you use? What do you like the most about the services offered by your public library?

How have libraries influenced you over your life and career?

II. Funding

What is your knowledge on the state of public library funding in Manitoba?

What will you/your party do to ensure that Manitobans have access to fully funded public libraries?

The Province finally increased public library funding in 2022, after a funding freeze of nearly 18 years at a rate of [\\$8.50 per capita](#), maximum. How would you, as a member of the provincial legislative assembly, work to increase or maintain regular and sustainable funding for public library service?

Public libraries often serve as the only point of access to internet service for northern, rural, and limited income Manitobans. In turn, public libraries are limited to the commercial internet service options in the service area and costs are a factor in their decisions.

How would you, as a member of the provincial legislative assembly, work to increase access to reliable, high-speed, internet service for northern and rural communities? How would you help support public libraries in accessing more cost-effective internet service options to better serve Manitobans?

Public libraries often serve as the only point of access to internet service for northern, rural, and limited income Manitobans. In turn, public libraries are limited to the commercial internet service options in the service area and costs are a factor in their decisions.

How would you, as a member of the provincial legislative assembly, work to increase access to reliable, high-speed, internet service for northern and rural communities? How would you help support public libraries in accessing more cost-effective internet service options to better serve Manitobans?

III. Vision for public library service

How important is your community's public library system to you and the people you are seeking to represent? And why?

How will you and your party support the necessity for diverse, inclusive, and culturally relevant literature and programming to be in all of Manitoba's public libraries?

What is your vision for public library service in [insert community name]?

How will you and your party ensure all Manitobans, including First Nations communities, have access to equitable public library service throughout the province?

How will you and your party support public libraries, such as the South Central Regional Library, that are facing concerted calls to censor/ban LGBTQ+ materials from their library collections?

With municipalities struggling to contend with socio-economic issues of poor access to mental health services, addictions, and poverty, how will you and your party assist public libraries that work to support their community struggling with these issues on a daily basis?

Social Media to share with your networks

Follow the Manitoba Library Association via our various social media platforms:

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/mb_library_assoc/

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MBLibAssn>

Twitter/X: https://twitter.com/MB_Lib_Assn

From now until the Election on October 3rd, MLA will be posting regularly with information that we urge you to share with your networks. The posts will:

Help spread the word about what Manitobans deserve in terms of their library programs and services, no matter where you live in Manitoba!

Help stop the spread of misinformation - support your creative and hard-working library staff by encouraging access to books, information and programs for *all* of our community members.

Helpful Resources

[Canadian Public Library Impact Studies](#)

A list of Canadian public libraries that have used the cost-benefit analysis (CBA) model to conduct economic impact studies (between 2013-2023)

Important to note: out of the 20 studies, the average return on \$1 invested is: \$5.38

Some examples:

[The Economic and Socio-cultural Impact of Edmonton Public Library](#)

Nordicity, March 2016.

[The Economics of Public Libraries](#)

The Municipal Leader, Fall 2016, pp 34-36.

[“General Economic Impact” – Libraries Matter](#)

A campaign of the American Library Association, this site shares multiple studies about the positive economic impacts created by public libraries.

Manitoba-specific

[Manitoba Library Association letter of June 30, 2017](#) to the Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage RE: Imagine. Creative Manitoba! Provincial cultural policy

Contains a range of library advocacy messaging and information.

[Imagine. Creative Manitoba! Discussion Paper](#)

Government of Manitoba, 2017 *See pages 68-79 for information about Manitoba public libraries.*

[Winnipeg at a Crossroads - Alternative Municipal Budget 2022](#)

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, public libraries section submitted by the Manitoba Library Association. *See pages 87-93 for general language about public library impacts.*

Winnipeg Public Library - [Library Value Calculator](#)

Internet/Broadband Issues in Manitoba

[Manitoba and a Digital-First Future: The Implications of Connectivity on Tech-Equity and Education](#)

Internet Society of Manitoba. *“Broadband speeds in Manitoba are among the slowest in Canada” (page 3).*

[Manitoba Rural Broadband Project](#)

Brandon University Rural Development Institute.

[State of Broadband in Manitoba and Canada](#)

Brandon University Rural Development Institute. *84% of Canadians have access to CRTC minimum standard broadband, versus 69% of Manitobans, 2020.*

[Connectivity in Rural and Remote Areas](#)

Auditor General of Canada. 2023.

Other Helpful Election Toolkits

Manitoba School Libraries Association - Advocacy: *Provincial Elections Impact School Libraries*

<https://www.manitobaschoollibraries.ca/advocacy>

Manitoba Teachers Society's Election Advocacy Toolkit 2023

<https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2023/03/22/election-preparedness-toolkit/>

Get Amplified! Election 2023

<https://rainbowresourcecentre.org/get-amplified>

People for Public Education

<https://www.facebook.com/people/People-for-Public-Education-MB>

<https://peopleforpubliced.com/>