

BE A PUBLIC SERVICE VOTER

ELECTION 2020 – LIBRARIES

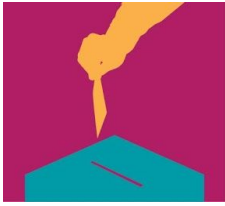
Public libraries play a critical role in supporting literacy and lifelong learning, promoting culture and providing recreational opportunities for Saskatchewan residents. Unfortunately, this critical role is not recognized by the actions of the Sask. Party government over the last decade.

The Sask. Party track record:

- After three years of funding freezes, the Sask. Party government slashes funding to urban and rural libraries in the 2017 provincial budget by a total of \$4.8 million. The move triggers massive protests across the province, including “read-ins” at MLA offices. Ultimately, the intense public pressure and falling poll numbers forces the Sask. Party government to reverse its funding cut that spring.
- The Sask. Party government continues to starve the province’s library system in subsequent budgets. The 2018 provincial budget freezes funding, while the 2019 and 2020 provincial budgets keep funding increases below the rate of inflation – 1.0% and 0.7%, respectively.
- The lack of funding from the provincial government hits rural regional library systems harder since they are more reliant on provincial funding. Material purchases, programming and staffing are negatively impacted. Wages for rural library workers are typically less than a living wage.
- In May 2020 the provincial government unveils its Re-open Saskatchewan Plan, which sets out a schedule for the re-opening of shuttered businesses and public services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan does not even include a single reference to libraries, which creates confusion for weeks about when public libraries are allowed to re-open.
- The Sask. Party government promises to review and update *The Public Libraries Act* but fails to follow through on this commitment.

What Saskatchewan needs:

- A significant boost in funding to public libraries, with stable annual funding, to ensure a well-resourced library system.



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- An enhanced library-to-library system to facilitate quicker and easier access to books and other materials held at over 300 public library branches.
- Funding to increase the wages of workers in rural regional library systems.
- An update of *The Public Libraries Act* to recognize the expanded services that public libraries provide to Saskatchewan residents in the 21st century and require the election of library boards.

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