

FRIENDS OF THE LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Presentation to Board of Control January 13, 2009

Friends of the London Public Library is a volunteer organization with a membership of over 400. It was organized in 1993 with a mandate to raise funds to enhance library programs and collections and to advocate on behalf of the library.

It was started because of the belief of library staff, trustees and citizens that the London Public Library is a great civic institution in need of support and volunteer assistance.

In 2008, Friends celebrated its fifteenth anniversary. As fund raisers, in our 15 years of operations, we have contributed over \$600,000 to enhance Library services. So strong is our belief in the value of the public library that we hope to be around for many years to provide continued support for our library and community.

Today, it is in that second role as advocates that we are speaking in support of the London Public Library proposed budget.

In preparation for today's presentation I spoke with Library staff to determine library use in relation to attendance, use of services, collections, computers etc. I found that in these economic times the public library has become more relevant than ever. In response to lower household incomes, cash strapped families and individuals are accessing the public library's collection of books, databases, DVD's, magazines and newspapers, more than ever. It seems Londoners know that no matter what is happening in the economy they can get the information, services, programs and assistance they need from their public library.

In the last quarter of 2008 the Library experienced increases in attendance, circulation, , reference transactions , computer use , and job search centers. We believe in 2009 these figures will continue to increase. To quote the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries " Public Library services are vital in a period of economic downturn and the use of these services will escalate dramatically.."

In the United States ,where the economic downturn has been evident for some time, the research indicates and I quote: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

“Americans are heading to their libraries in droves and tapping into a host of services from books to internet access to entertainment to programming and events. A recent Harris Poll found that around 75 percent of Americans have a library card and have visited their local public library in the past year - up from 65 percent two years ago. ” (Jim Rettig: Libraries Stand Ready to Help in Tough Economic Times” www.huffingtonpost.com)

The London Public Library has achieved the 3.2% target approved by Municipal Council. We know the London Public Library and the multitude of services it provides is essential to this community especially in these economic times.

Friends of the London Public Library support the library’s 2009 proposed budget, as it has been submitted . We believe the Library is socially responsive, well managed, fiscally accountable, and demonstrates cost-effective use of public funds.

As Friends of London Public Library we will continue to raise funds for enhancements. These funds, raised entirely by volunteers, should never be considered as core funding. We are counting on you to fund the core services to the level which this community expects and deserves.

Londoners love their Public Library. They are counting on you for continued library support.