

FRIENDS OF THE LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY
Presentation to Board of Control
January 13, 2010

Friends of the London Public Library is a volunteer organization representing over 600 people which includes membership and volunteers. 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.

As fund raisers, in our 16 years of operations, we have contributed over \$700,000 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.

Last year when I spoke to you, I indicated that in tough economic times Library service increases dramatically. My research indicates that:

“Since August 2008, more than 300 articles on the increased use of public libraries in tough economic times have been published in the US. According to a recent Harris poll, 75% of Americans have a public library card, the biggest number since the American Library Association began keeping records in 1990. According to the Canadian Library Association, 2/3 of Canadians or 21 million people have a library card.”

In preparation for today's presentation, I spoke with Library staff to determine library use in relation to attendance, use of services, collections and computers, etc. I found that in these economic times ,like the U.S. and the rest of Canada, the London Public Library has become more relevant than ever.

In 2009 up to the end of September (end of the 3rd quarter), the Library experienced significant and continuous. Increases: attendance up 5.94%; circulation 8.04%; new registrations 4.82%; and website access 12.65%. At the Library's job search centers, thousands of people are looking for vital information on job opportunities, career planning and training, small business management, literacy programs and computer skills development.

Public Libraries are a bright spot in this economy. As one article pointed out -“ markets down - libraries up”. Public libraries provide free access to all types of materials - books, music, DVDS, audio books, newspapers, magazine and downloadable audio books. They provide communities with public space, promoting mutual support and social inclusion. Hard economic times can be isolating, and public libraries bring people together in an inclusive, supportive environment.

We believe in 2010 the London Public Library will continue to experience increased use. Even though there are signs that the economy may be improving, the impact on families and those in the workforce will continue to be felt during the coming year.

The London Public Library has submitted a budget for 2010 with a .6% (point six-per cent) increase. We know the 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 2010 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 the 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.

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