

# LIBRARY MANAGER'S COUNCIL REPORT

## NLLS Executive and Board Meeting – September 21, 2019

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### LMC Executive

- Jodi Dahlgren, Chair (Wainwright Public Library)
- Tracy Woloshyniuk, 1st Vice Chair (Newbrook Public Library)
- Donna Williams, 2nd Vice Chair (Vegreville Public Library)
- Isabelle Cramp, Secretary (Morinville Public Library)
- Maureen Penn, Past Chair (Lac La Biche County Libraries)

### Library Act Changes (from Library Managers)

- 4(4) A member of the municipal board is eligible to be reappointed for only 2 additional consecutive terms of office, unless at least 2/3 of the whole council passes a resolution stating that the member may be reappointed as a member for more than 3 consecutive terms.
  - Is this portion absolutely necessary? I do know of a library board chair who has been chair for more than 5 terms and will probably continue to be until her retirement.
- 34(1) All minutes, resolutions and bylaws of a board shall be entered in books to be kept by it for that purpose and the books shall be signed by the chair or acting chair.
  - I am not sure if it is specified in another regulation somewhere, but would prefer to know length that the record need to kept.
- In the Act and Regulations at the system level the formula regarding MLIS staffing should reflect the numbers needed by our Libraries. Therefore locations with professional staff should be removed from that calculation despite their population size. NLLS is still responsible for providing adequate and well trained staff who are willing to help their Member Libraries.
- In general the Act and Regulations should be more open for libraries to change systems, create a new system or become a stand alone entity without any penalties, geographic restrictions or blocks from provincial resource sharing.
- System Boards should have representation from Library Boards and not just municipalities, Metis settlements and school authorities.
- It would be better to put our efforts to advocate for an increase in funding with so many libraries struggling for dollars.
- Opposed to amending the requirement of hiring an MLIS staff once population reaches 10,000 on the grounds that it will make it easier to push wages down and make it easier to avoid investing in staff. Librarians bring a unique skillset to the team and offer different skills and knowledge than technicians and managers. It rounds out the team and we are better for it. In short, I feel this amendment would not benefit libraries. On the other hand, if I were in a center around the 10,000 population mark and I had firm numbers on my budget from council this money would probably need to be cut from somewhere else to find room.

- Our Library Board and myself support this requirement as they saw the benefits plus need for qualified staff before our population ever reached 10,000. I personally think if the cap was increased then we do a disservice to our library users by not provided the expertise needed to expand library programs and services.
- I am in agreeance with the thoughts about changing the MLIS requirement. I am a firm believer in experience having a higher value than education. That being said I also don't want to see staffing wages go any lower. I think with the fact that there is requirement for some MLIS trained staff to be at the regional level that we have the expertise to draw from there if necessary. I've found that the majority of the time I've drawn from the expertise of those that don't hold MLIS more than the later. I'd rather that they changed the act that if a municipality doesn't belong to a library system and is over 10,000 then they would require an MLIS trained staff member (not necessarily the library manager/director) but otherwise it is at the discretion of the Library Board, until they reach a larger population.
- [Regarding the requirement of an MLIS after 10,000 population] What I have come to as a conclusion is I do not think it should be a requirement. My number one reason is that in order to run the Library I find that more Management type experience is required than Library Science skills. I myself have spend more time on budgetary, staffing, policy type jobs than specific Library Skill type jobs. Having said that...I have worked in the Library for over 30 years and the knowledge in Library specific skills is also very valuable, having both is a great asset. Most of the people I have talked to that have their MLIS say they do not learn enough about Management practices at Library School.

As far as the monetary component, I believe that most communities between 10,000-20,000 do not receive the per capita funding needed to offer a competitive salary to a Professional, therefore most do not get compensated accordingly and only stay in a smaller center long enough to get some experience and then move on to a bigger center, which is very unfortunate for the community and Library and it can create a revolving door in Leadership. I believe one of the number one skills Leadership in a Library should have is knowledge of their community and the specific needs the demographic has. Having to recruit from other places is always a need if there is a MLIS requirement, because not a lot of people have that specific skill set in smaller communities, therefore you get candidates that might not be fully invested in the community they serve.

I do not think the wages would be pushed down, most communities of 10,000-20,000 population do not have the wage to compensate the MLIS properly in the first place and the Municipality is not going to give you a huge increase regardless of the Provincial demand for a Professional Librarian.

So I am definitely in agreement to amend that requirement, with still putting a lot of value on the skills a person gains with the degree.

## Feel Good Stories (from Library Managers)

- A member of the public walked into the Smoky Lake Public Library in a tizzy. She was having an issue with her taxes and required a form. She had contacted the CRA repeatedly and had requested that they please mail her the form. Finally, after no response, she thought to come to the library. By the time she was partway through the story, I had taken her note with the information, located her form and printed it. She burst into tears! I was

hugged, told that 'I was amazing' and thanked profusely. If I had not been able to locate her form, she would still be frustrated and upset. The Public Library saved her day!

- If it's not too late, we have a new-ish family in town who moved from Montreal and recently discovered the library. A neighbor told them about the library and the programs we offer to kids. They attended our Summer Reading Program and met connections for the pre-school and play groups in our area. They also learned about our Early Literacy Program and plan to attend each monthly session. They plan to attend the (English speaking) school here but their daughters speak only French. The mom stayed with the girls as a translator and we had a lot of fun with all the kids - they taught the 2 girls English words and the girls taught us the 'corresponding' French words. As their mom said, "The easiest way for my daughters to learn English is to come to programs such as the Summer Reading Program and the Early Literacy Program. Thank you so much for introducing us to other moms and kids and also to everyone for making us feel so Welcome in the community!"
- I also have another patron who recently had hip surgery. She wanted me to say that the Inter Library Loans system is invaluable to her. She is able to order in items that we don't have here. She is also very happy that as a small library, I know her and what she likes to read. She is not able to drive, or do much of anything for at least 10 weeks, so she has been calling me to pick out 5 or 6 books a week for her and I deliver them on my way home and pick up her returns. Without this she wouldn't be able to have books to read while on recovery!
- As for feel good stories I have a few comments that have come out of our Focus Groups we did this spring for our POS.
  - The Library has become my window on the world
  - The Library is a welcoming, safe space for all ages and demographics
  - Internet access (at the library) opens up the world to people who don't have their own access, it's always busy, the trend of usage is not diminishing
  - I do not drive and without the library's ability to bring in materials from around the Province and from Academic Libraries, I wouldn't ever get to read and study the materials and topics I'm interested in
- From a young patron that participated in our programs "I love coming to Lego Program, I have friends here and they let me play with them"
- We have one family who wanted to share their story of our library:

We moved to this small town from Calgary a few years ago. At first, it was a bit hard to adjust to the small - town life. Most people were nice, but there were some who didn't seem to be open to us 'strangers'. I didn't grow up with the best childhood and am trying to give my 2 sweet babes something better than I had. Long story short, my now ex got depressed and started drinking not long after we moved here and became abusive. It started mentally with me and turned physical. He started ignoring our 5-year-old son and telling him that he wasn't his dad; wouldn't hold our newborn daughter. Not a good situation and I wanted to get away from that - which can be hard in a small town with not a lot of resources. He finally left after months of me trying to get him help with no success and, even though things are hard, they are looking up. The library had a big part in me seeing my self worth again and helping us to get the resources and help I needed. Backtracking some, I knew the library manager from when I came in and got library memberships for us. The Manager would always offer me coffee and company – even on days she was busy, she always took the time to come and chat for a few minutes and offer the kids a hug. I would bring the kids in to get books and movies at least once a week and I would also use the computers and wifi. The wifi access is a huge plus for me, as I can't afford to get it on my own, and the access it gives me to resources is amazing! The Library Manager helped me use Cypress Resume to create a resume and apply for jobs online, I

found tutorials on house repairs on the Do-It-Yourself database and my kids love Tumblebooks! An opportunity my FREE library membership gives me that I wouldn't otherwise have!

The Library started an Early Literacy Program that they hold once a month and I always get a personal invite and reminder phone call to the program. I was pretty shy at first, but the Manager introduced me to all the other parents there and I was able to make some connections for a playgroup. It got us out into the community! I was also able to connect with the pre-school/kindergarten teacher through the program, which helped me in making decisions on when to send my son to school. There is also a lady who comes from the Red Wagon group who is educated in Early Childhood, and she was so great at getting me exercises I could do with my son to bring his gross and fine motor skills up to age level, and some starting activities I can do with my baby girl. These were all great bonuses of the Early Literacy Program – it is an amazing thing in itself. The kids love coming and they are learning letters, numbers, thinking skills etc through play and not even realizing they are learning! We are so fortunate to have this program in our small rural town!

I broke down one day at the library when I was in the midst of my troubles with my ex. The Manager got my son busy with puzzles and held both my 4 month baby girl and me while I literally cried on her shoulder. She told me if I needed to talk that she would listen. The whole story just came out. Instead of looking down on me or calling me stupid, like my own family had, she told me that she would help in any way she could. She found me resources in the surrounding larger communities – a subsidized counsellor for me and my son, a local lady who would babysit at a reduced rate – and much more help for women who are in bad situations. She did so much more as well - let me browse the garage sale items they got donated before the actual garage sale so that I could take what I needed when my ex cleared most of my stuff out one night we were gone; talked to the school who were collecting food bank items so that we could get food baskets, gave me the info for the Christmas Charity baskets from a local church which allowed Santa to visit our house on Christmas Eve; got together with the local quilting queens when I worried about getting Halloween Costumes for my kids (they made both my kids a costume to wear!) and she made sure that we all got winter coats, mitts, toques, scarves, socks and pjs from their annual donation tree. She also got me the information of doctors that I could get my son some testing and diagnoses to see if he would be 'coded' for school.

In all honestly, the library and all the amazing programs, services and other help that the Library Manager offered to me and my family (way beyond her job description) has been life changing. There is so much more that the Library has offered to other families, patrons and the school that isn't listed here. Libraries are so much more than just books!

In my opinion the Library is the single most important thing in our community!

## LMC Meeting

Our Next LMC Meeting is on October 2, 2019 at 10am.

Respectfully Submitted  
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