



**ADVOCACY**  
 at your library

# PROVINCIAL ELECTION STRATEGIES

*April 16, 2019 is Provincial Election Day in Alberta*

## Know your message:

As libraries and politics are often intertwined, efforts to lobby, build and strengthen relationships with Alberta candidates are crucial to ensure government agencies continue to support and fund these valuable community institutions. Ask your candidates how they will support libraries in the legislature and work with library boards to resolve concerns. The following are issues facing Alberta libraries today:

- Sustainable funding is critical to ensuring public libraries continue to empower Albertans and strengthen communities. More than ever, libraries have a far-reaching impact on their users and communities in areas such as:
  - Early Literacy
  - Diversity and Inclusion
  - Social Integration
  - Adult Learning
  - Participation in Digital Economy
  - Support for Immigrants
  - Partnerships with Indigenous Communities
- Without sustainable provincial funding at current levels or better, many libraries in small communities may have to close their doors or reduce hours. Ask your candidates on their position on maintaining or increasing municipal funding to ensure continued support.
- Provincial library funding has not increased substantially since 2009. There was a \$0.10 per capita increase that came into effect in 2015. Since then, provincial funding has not kept up with current populations; large or small. Therefore, all libraries are struggling financially.
- Alberta libraries are busy. Despite misconceptions that libraries are becoming increasingly irrelevant in an era of the Internet, many libraries have experienced continuous growth in circulation, programming, library visits, cardholders and community partnerships.
- Ask candidates if they are involved in their local library and what services they like to use.

## Get personal

Rather than presenting a long list of services, introduce your politicians to your library staff and mention how they contribute to making a difference in your community. Using names and anecdotes will likely resonate more with your candidate and leave a lasting impression. For example: Dee-Ann at the Strathmore Municipal Library started a signing program that allowed her to communicate with those around her, and helped the community become more inclusive to people with hearing disabilities.

### Do your candidates know?

- Marigold experienced an increase of 4.3 % of cardholders. More than 107,000 individuals and families are in possession of a Marigold library card.
- Over 2 million items were loaned to Marigold cardholders in 2018; an increase of 7.7%. More than 1 million of those items were brought in from other libraries to fill patron requests. That's an increase of 10% from the previous year.
- There are over 3.2 million items available in the TRACpac online catalogue.
- eBooks and eAudio book borrowing increased by nearly 11% to over 206,000 items loaned.

## ● Preparation is key

- Stay up-to-date on your candidates and their platforms. Gather information on their backgrounds and interests to establish a personal connection.
- Inquire about the candidates' knowledge of and vision for public libraries and for your public library in particular.
- The government has committed supporting equitable access to library services, provide funding assistance and establish and support a province wide resource sharing network.
- Educate yourself on the government's previous commitments. The Alberta government has contributed nearly \$30 million in total provincial grants to Alberta's 222 municipal library boards and seven regional library systems.
- Library trustees on 229 library boards provide the strategic direction and play an important role in ensuring that our library meets its financial, legal and community obligations. Library staff are leaders in ensuring quality services in the community.
- Talk about memberships and attendance for programs and events. (Ask patrons if they could provide a quote about a program they attended.)
- Mention that your patrons can use their library card in public libraries throughout the province and return their borrowed materials to any library.
- Explain, in a unique way, how your library supports the community and the province, e.g. participate in Resource Sharing and host information sessions through Videoconference for other Alberta libraries to access.
- Get your candidates involved by inviting them to take part in a program, such as an all-candidate meeting at the library.
- In most cases, remain politically impartial.
- Follow-up—the key to building strong relationships is to stay connected. It could be something as simple as sending an email to thank them for their time.

## ● Have your electoral boundaries changed?

Two years ago, the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission implemented changes to the electoral boundaries to be in effect for this year's election. As a result, many communities are finding themselves in redrawn ridings and voting alongside other neighbours than in the past. Areas affected by the changes are:

- |                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Airdrie-Cochrane | ■ Chestermere-Strathmore    |
| ■ Airdrie-East     | ■ Drumheller-Stettler       |
| ■ Banff-Kananaskis | ■ Okotoks-Sheep River       |
| ■ Cardston-Siksika | ■ Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills |

\*Electoral Boundaries for 2019 can be found at:

[https://www.elections.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019Boundaries\\_ALBERTA\\_11X17.pdf](https://www.elections.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019Boundaries_ALBERTA_11X17.pdf)