

# A Message to the Community

## from the Saskatoon Public Library Board

In 2016, we released Saskatoon Public Library's (SPL) strategic plan with a vision to change lives through community connections, engagement, and inclusivity. The new direction for SPL builds on the rich legacy of community service the public library has provided over the years and strives to meet the needs of our community moving forward.

The world around us has changed, and the needs of our community are changing. Saskatoon is growing and becoming more culturally diverse. Technology is transforming how we interact, view the world and access information. The role public libraries play in their communities is evolving from book repositories and are becoming vibrant people places. We cannot achieve our goals if we continue to operate within the status quo. To meet the needs of the community now and into the future, we must change the way SPL operates—both structurally and fundamentally.

It is a difficult and humbling experience to admit that our operations do not reflect our values of innovation, equitable access, diversity, and inclusion, but that is our current reality. SPL is working to address long-standing operational issues including equitable pay, technology deficiencies, facility issues, and significant inefficiencies. While SPL has met its mandate in the past, the organization has failed to keep pace with both societal changes and public library best practices.

Our strategic plan is an ambitious, but necessary, response to both internal and external realities. The Board has directed Library Administration to implement the strategic plan. Together we're working to provide the best and most relevant library services possible while delivering maximum value for the community's investment in the public library.

One of the most significant changes required to achieve our vision is a change to our operating philosophy. We're moving from traditional desk-based service—where the main focus is on providing patrons access to information, where decisions related to programs and services are made solely by library employees—to the Community-Led service philosophy, which focuses on patron and community needs through building relationships and partnerships.

SPL's move to the Community-Led service philosophy is our acknowledgement we can do better to serve you, the Saskatoon community. To the patrons SPL has served well in the past, you can and should expect service levels to improve with these changes. To community members who feel the library has not served you well, or who have been made to feel unwelcome, we commit to improving. The Community-Led approach calls on libraries to identify and to remove barriers to service—namely for those who face marginalization, discrimination and barriers to full participation in society. In doing so, Community-Led service aims to make public libraries truly inclusive spaces.

We appreciate that these are significant changes and that change, even positive, can be difficult. We are grateful to SPL employees who, despite structural and operational barriers, have served their community and helped establish SPL as a valued public service. We are committed to ensuring their success through this transition.

As with any major organizational change, the benefits may not be immediately apparent. We are asking for the support and patience of our valued employees and community members during this time. We believe that these changes are required and will result in a stronger, more vibrant organization that is better positioned to serve the community's ever-changing needs.