



Factsheet for prospective Medicine Hat Public Library Trustees

Thank you for entertaining the possibility of joining us on the MHPL Board. The attached information sheet, provided by the City of Medicine Hat, describes the functions and duties of a public library board member. This factsheet is designed to highlight some of the positive aspects of becoming a trustee, and to give you a better sense of the kinds of activities you would be engaged in and the opportunities you would have. We hope to help you answer the question: “Is the role of trustee right for me?”

Trustees receive no remuneration, but the role can be very rewarding. We could provide quite a long list of benefits, but in the interests of brevity here are just two of the most important ones:

As a trustee you’ll have a chance to learn, and to apply some of the knowledge and skills that you already have

Libraries are all about learning, and as a library trustee you will find yourself in a very rich learning environment. At a minimum, you will become better acquainted with the vast range of resources and services that are available through our library and you will become a much better-informed user of libraries, information and new media. As a trustee you will have a chance to grapple with many interesting and important issues, as we seek ways to make the library an even more attractive destination, and to meet a broader range of needs within the community. Also, the library provides funding for Board members to travel to conferences and participate in workshops.

As a trustee you’ll be serving the community; you’ll be doing something worthwhile, and you’ll be part of something good.

Medicine Hat has an excellent library, and we operate in a great environment. We have a very strong administrative team and our frontline staff is widely recognized as the library’s greatest asset. We belong to the Shortgrass Library System, which enables us to easily share resources with other libraries in this corner of the province. Libraries and systems are connected to one another through The Alberta Library, so that resources and expertise can be shared with public and post-secondary libraries all over Alberta. We have a very positive relationship with the City of Medicine Hat, and we work closely with partners at the Esplanade, the CCDA, and others. The provincial and federal governments are also coming to realize just how essential public libraries are for sustaining and enhancing communities, and this may well provide us with opportunities to obtain more funding so that we can continue to develop new services and programming.

The library board is a governing board, which means that the solutions that we arrive at in consultation with our staff are implemented without the need to gain approval from

another body. Our meetings themselves are positive and productive, and we are continuously looking for ways to improve our own performance as a Board. Last year the MHPL Board won the Alberta Library Trustee's Association Award of Excellence. We have recently revamped the format of our Board meetings, dealing with routine matters more quickly so that we can explore important topics at greater depth and hold mini-workshops for trustees. We are in the process of developing a thorough orientation process for new trustees.

Is the Role of Trustee Right for You?

The key qualification for a library trustee is commitment to the library. Those of us who are serving as Board members are convinced that the library plays an important role in "fostering life-long learning and enhancing the vitality of the community" (to quote from our vision statement).

The Board sets direction and ensures that suitable policies are in place so that our library can come closer to achieving its full potential. Since we're working at the planning and policy level, the role will appeal to those who feel comfortable making a contribution in meetings. If you would prefer a more "hands on" role, there are many rewarding volunteer opportunities available, such as projects of the Friends of the Library or delivering books to the homebound.

Next Step(s)

Notices concerning a vacant position on the Board will soon be appearing in the Medicine Hat News. Information on how to apply will be available at that time. City Council will review the applications, and the successful candidate will be notified in December. Please don't be discouraged if you are not selected this time around – it is often the case that many well-qualified people apply, and you might have to try again in the fall, or next year.

There is a great deal of valuable information available online, and you might wish to do a bit of reading and research either at home or using one of the library's Internet computers. Our own website – www.mhpl.info – and the Shortgrass site -- www.shortgrass.ca -- are good places to begin. The Alberta Library Trustees Association also has an excellent site: www.librarytrustees.ab.ca.

Also, feel free to contact the following people:

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