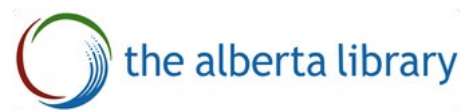


Provincial Election Advocacy Toolkit

Last updated: March 2023



If you have questions or feedback on this toolkit, please feel free to contact us!
<https://www.thealbertalibrary.ca/>

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Introduction

The Alberta Library has prepared this advocacy toolkit to help library Boards, staff, stakeholders and supporters to understand how they can be most effective in advocating for libraries at the provincial level.

Different types of libraries are under the jurisdiction of different government departments and are impacted by government decision-making in different ways.

This toolkit is designed to help you in the following ways:

- To understand how to contact government officials and what issues they have the power to act on
- To plan advocacy activities that will be effective
- To support your advocacy with research on the role libraries can play in the community and the economy

In addition to the material included in this main document, we have also included some social media graphics which you are welcome to use.

Find your MLA

Contacting your current MLA is a great way to begin your advocacy efforts.

<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/members/members-of-the-legislative-assembly>

You can send them an email, contact them by phone at their office, or use social media postables to send a postcard with some of your advocacy points.

How do the levels of government impact libraries?

Before beginning your advocacy effort, it's important to know what issues are worth focusing your energy on.

For advocacy related to the upcoming provincial election, focus on these issues!

| Federal | Provincial | Municipal |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Creates federal laws on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copyright • Accessibility • Freedom of expression • Privacy • Federal research, heritage, and history projects | <p>PUBLIC LIBRARIES Ministry: Municipal Affairs, Public Library Services Branch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides some funding to individual public libraries and the regional library systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 2021, provided \$37 million, \$31 million of which was Public Library Board Operating Grants ○ \$1 million was for electronic resources ○ \$0.7 million for library services for Indigenous people • Sets laws that govern public libraries, including the Libraries Act • Supports Public Library Network (for eResources) and SuperNet (for internet access) • Supports and funds the provincial interlibrary loan program • Government of Alberta has a role in supporting (not providing) provision of accessible resources for Albertans with print disabilities <p>The Cabinet Minister who oversees public libraries is the Minister of Municipal Affairs, an MLA chosen by the Premier</p> <p>POST-SECONDARY LIBRARIES Ministry: Alberta Advanced Education</p> | <p>PUBLIC LIBRARIES</p> <p>Municipalities: Provide the majority of public libraries' funding Individual municipal councils oversee public libraries and library Boards</p> <p>POST-SECONDARY LIBRARIES</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| | Provides the majority of funding for post-secondary education, including library services | |
| | SCHOOL LIBRARIES Ministry: Alberta Education Provides all funding for K-12 education, including library services | SCHOOL LIBRARIES |
| | OTHER LIBRARIES The Legislature library provides services to MLAs Many ministries within the provincial government have their own libraries to serve their employees | OTHER LIBRARIES |

Effective Advocacy

To ensure your advocacy time and effort will be well-spent, make sure you are considering these three factors:



Targeted: Know your audience, **Brief:** Don't drown them in details, **Ongoing:** Continue the conversation

Prepare an elevator speech: If you end up with access to a candidate or government representative you'll likely only have a quick moment so it's important to have a quick, informative piece to talk with them about.

Remember that regardless of your personal opinions about the individual, it is most effective to approach them as partners in solving the problem instead of as an adversary.

1. Introduce who you are and your organization – in the case of libraries it can also be helpful to give a general population served
2. Your asks:
 - Know who you are talking to and their scope and customize the ask to that. If you are talking to the advanced education minister talking about funding for children programming for public libraries will miss the mark.
 - Try to have your ask be simplified to a sentence or two even if that leaves some details out – instead of drowning them in details offer your contact information so they can follow up with you if they'd like to know more.
 - Not sure what your asks should be? Consider listing a few of the major problems your library faces then brainstorm solutions that could be government supported, those can become your asks. (examples on pages 9-11 <https://alignab.ca/alberta-provincial-advocacy-toolkit-for-align-association-of-community-services-2022/>)
3. Information about your industry:
 - What is your impact/role in the economy and community?
 - Focus on their scope for example, focus on economic impacts when talking to the Minister of Labour etc
 - Avoid getting too detailed. For example, you could say: "Libraries play a key role in small local businesses, I don't have time to get into all the details but if you'd like to discuss how we support the local economy further here is my business card"

Library Advocacy Activities

The following are some suggestions for library advocacy activities that can be effective.

- Having your library board members or friends of the library build and establish relationships with public servants can be extremely useful in terms of communication and clarification of issues and concerns. Public servants don't often change over as often as higher-level politicians, so you can create longstanding, functional relationships.
- Have your board / Friends of the Library attend any and all public forums, armed with a couple clear, concise questions that get to the heart of your libraire's goals during the election.
- Go through some of the research presented in the [government support documentation](#) that supports your main goal and send it to candidates.
- Use the social media graphics that you will find in this toolkit! Fill them with a few key points that you pull from the [government support documentation](#) below. Encourage your users to contact their MLA to discuss their support for the public library.
- Reach out to local newsletters or newspapers, and share your questions and key issues that stand out to you. Invite readers to see any of the displays in the library.
- Seek out stories about the library and its impacts and share them with your local newspaper or news outlet.

Empowering your supporters

- Encourage your patrons to spread the word online by following your library on social media and sharing their posts and pictures. They can tweet @ your library, tag your library on Facebook, post a library photo

on Instagram, or write a Google or Yelp review. Encourage your patrons to share personal stories on your library's social media about the essential role that the library is playing in your community. Use the hashtag #voice4libraries.

- Ask your Friends of the Library group to help! Although direct fundraising by Friends of the Libraries groups can be very effective and appreciated, if they can help advocate with municipal Councils, that can be even more effective when it results in budget increases! Friends of the Library groups can also have a much wider impact, beyond direct fundraising, by advocating for the library in the community. Many libraries across the country owe their new additions or new buildings to effective advocacy campaigns waged by their Friends to ensure community support.

Election and Voting Awareness

- Set up stations in your library educating people when, where, and how they can vote. You can include postcards (included in the “Extra materials” section of this package) and [government support documentation](#) from this kit on the display. Ensure your display uses clear and easily understandable language, as well as [accessible fonts and colours](#). Be sure to make this information available early, so those who need to register to vote have time to do so.
- More information at <https://www.elections.ab.ca/voters/>
- [The Canadian Standards Association \(CAN/CSA-B651-95, Barrier-Free Design\)](#) - Canadian standards for design and signage

Lobbying

- Lobbying in Alberta: Your board may want to consider if they can lobby on behalf of the library. Here are some resources to help you understand if that is an option available to your library:
- [What is Lobbying and Who is a Lobbyist?](#)
 - From the Alberta Lobbyist Registry
- [The Lobbying Act](#)
 - Restrictions on Applications of the Act 3.1 lists those who the Act does not apply to.
- If you find from the items above that your board members or other employees could lobby for your library without becoming a formalized Lobbyist, don't forget to research the laws governing their current positions to make sure there isn't anything else that may affect their eligibility.

More Resources

<https://albertanonprofits.ca/nonprofit-public-policy>

Contains resources and statements on various sectors, responses to budgets, sector value research, and toolkits.

<https://www.thenonprofitvote.ca/>

Dedicated to uniting the voices of non-profits in Alberta. Contains advocacy resources

Supporting Research:

Your Library Supports the Goals of The Government

We've done the research and found supporting information for how libraries support the goals of governments present, past, and future. The headings below are general categories found across the platforms of Alberta's major political parties.

Bolstering Government Services and Healthcare

COVID-19 has highlighted a need for more accessible and better-quality healthcare in Alberta for all parties. The Liberal party also identifies a goal to recover from COVID-19. This category includes:

- **COVID-19 Recovery**
 - **General Healthcare and Health Services**
- In the midst of the Covid pandemic "Libraries immediately stepped up to offer safe connectivity options by: providing and/or procuring outdoor ("parking lot") Wi-Fi; loaning hotspots and other devices such as tablets and laptops; offering virtual, curbside, and in-library support for the tasks that library users need to complete online" (Byrne and Visser 5). These services were crucial in a time where already disadvantaged populations were cut off from even more services--"Among the uses, libraries reported that 'patrons frequently used Wi-Fi in the parking lot to apply for unemployment benefits and complete job applications while we were closed to the public'" (Byrne and Visser 6).
 - Early in the pandemic, the skills of librarians and the support of their libraries were instrumental for researchers: Collating daily case counts before the local open data portal was improved for collection, transforming and making useable Statistics Canada datasets representing employment and job creation ("generally within four hours of release"!), and filling in doing reference for Statistics Canada experts who were stretched thin (Cooper et al. 3, 4). Librarians were also quickly able to fill the need of data stewardship and training for many researchers new to the open data requirement of many covid-motivated government grants (Cooper et al. 5).
 - Covid has seen the shift of many health services shift to virtual spaces. While this can be convenient and economical for some, many groups can find it harder to access this kind of service--"existing virtual care solutions are often designed for the English-speaking, health-literate, and tech-savvy patient population... Older ethnic adults often do not see themselves reflected in these identities and, as such, continue to be excluded from receiving virtual care" (Pham et al. 2). Many libraries across Canada and internationally have programs geared towards both English language learning and technology skilling, as well as being



Recommended Tool

The [Canadian Index of Wellbeing](#) is a tool that measures "good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture" (Bradley, 4). Bradley posits that libraries contribute to every dimension of the index. The health facet in particular is fulfilled through "assistance locating and access to quality health information, referrals to community health resources, on-site health supports, resources in accessible formats, [and a] safe warm space for those who need it (Bradley, 9).

welcoming places for people of all ethnicities. The availability of these spaces and programs can aid ethnic adults and others to be able to build the skills to use virtual health services, or to receive help in using them.

- “If all Canadians had access to digital health tools, it would decrease 47 million in-person visits to healthcare providers...representing an annual gain of CAD \$400 Million” (Hyman et al. 2). Additionally, “if Canadians were to increase [digital personal health records] adoption to 25%,35%, or 50%, the total value to patients and caregivers would increase to Can \$362 to Can \$391 million, Can \$505 to Can \$543 million, and Can \$720 to Can \$769 million, respectively” (Hackett et al. 9). However, this relies on a certain level of digital literacy which is one of the major skills taught in libraries through assistance using public computers. Access to tools in general via computers is also bolstered by libraries of all types.

Supporting Economy Sustainability and Expansion

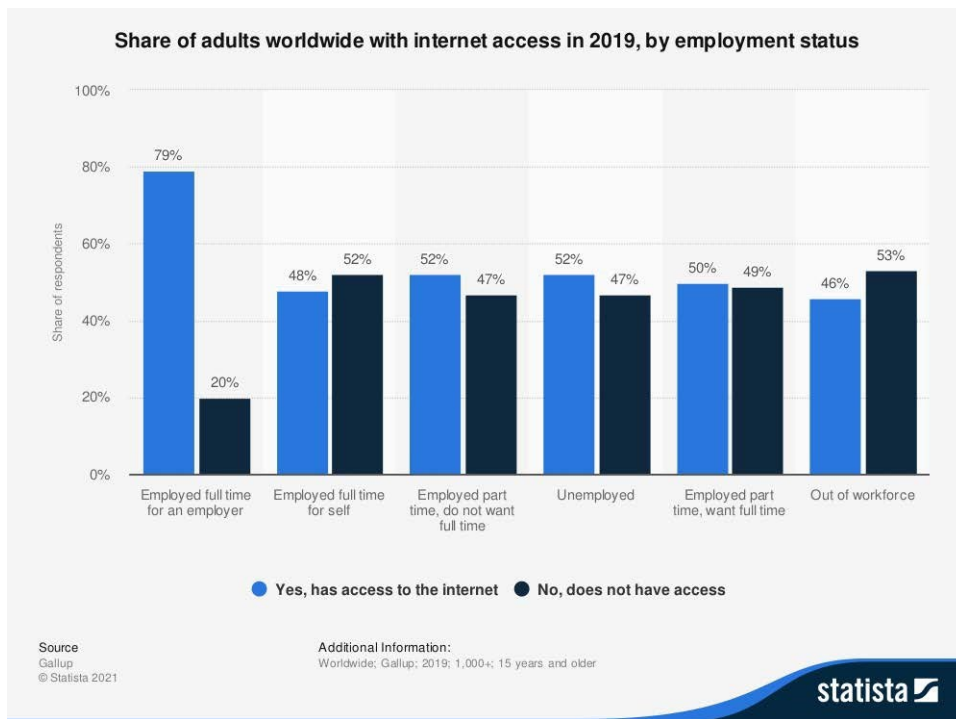
All parties wish to grow and sustain the Alberta economy. The economy can be supported by:

- Increased **Value for Tax Dollars**
 - **Workforce Entry** and new jobs
 - Improved conditions of **Employment/Unemployment**
-
- Libraries like Edmonton Public Library create programs that support both Workforce Entry such as EPL’s ‘Innovation U: An Entrepreneurship Series’ where the library teams up with a local foundation to provide patrons with free coaching on business plans, product brainstorming, and more (Warren).
 - Many libraries also create spaces on their websites that collate resources for job seekers, often having links to purchased resume building software, skilling suites, links to external job banks or employee rights resources, and volunteer resources. Examples can be found on the [EPL](#), [St. Albert Public Library](#), and [Regina Public Library](#) sites. Job seeking online is the new norm—a Pew Research study says that 79% of those surveyed said they used online resources to help with their job search, and 34% of those said it was the most important resource. These responses were the highest out of any other job search style (Smith 3).
 - Access to the Internet is a key factor that contributes to workforce entry and career success and is also an important service libraries provide.



Recommended Tool

Similar to the Canadian Wellbeing Index, a tool called the Social Return on Investment takes a different approach to the traditional ROI. It measures library value on 8 facets, one of them being Economic Development. The study includes indicators of each facet. The toolkit that was created through the study is included in the PEAT package.



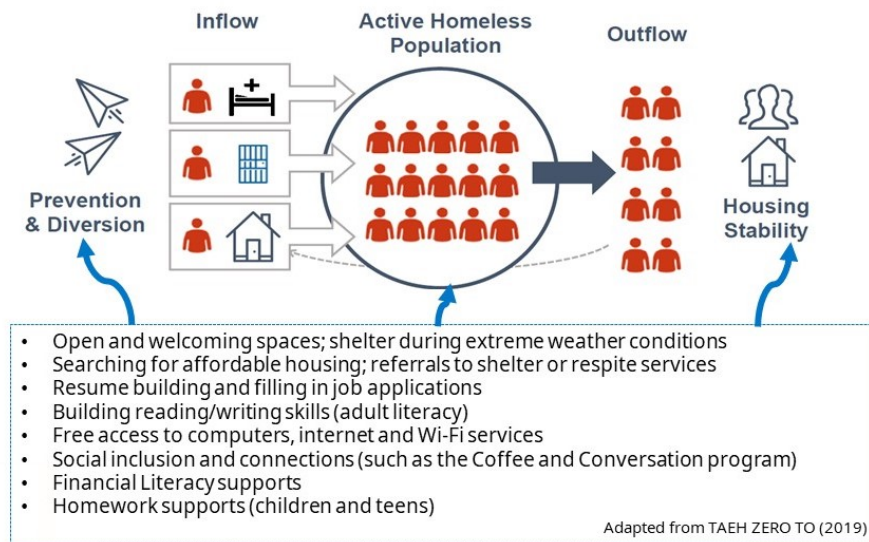
- This 2019 statistic shows that 79% of full-time employees worldwide have internet access, and 52% of unemployed people worldwide do not. This suggests a strong correlation between internet access, made equitable by libraries, and employment or economic prosperity (Statista).
- The support that libraries provide through internet access, resource lists, and active assistance is imperative for unemployed people who don't have internet at home, don't have the skills to apply online, or both.

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

The NDP and Liberal parties both seek to improve housing and living conditions for Albertans, and the UCP seeks to “support Albertans most in need.” The NDP also identifies a need to serve elders and gender minorities.

Within the broader category of protecting vulnerable populations, some particular areas of focus where libraries play a role are:

- **Unhoused people and those affected by unstable housing**
- **Newcomers to Canada**
- **Those affected by the opioid crisis**



- This graphic shows the variety of supports that libraries can and do give those with unstable housing (Velji).
- Often unhoused people come to the library during the day because homeless shelters are closed. Libraries provide a safe and warm alternative to the constantly dwindling free areas to rest and socialize. As mentioned above, libraries can provide many supports for unhoused people in working towards finding housing, jobs, or mental health resources through internet access, programs, and reference help. But, funding is needed to both purchase these resources and staff time, as well as providing training to staff to help vulnerable populations in empathetic and compassionate ways (Geisler 21).
- For those coming to Canada libraries provide a space where they can start to figure out their new lives. “A total of 70 percent of respondents first visited the library within 1 year of arriving in Canada” with “nearly three-quarters [responding] that they visit library branches once a week.” Almost half of the newcomer respondents stayed for one to two hours, whereas another study concluded that 29 percent of the general library population stayed for an hour or more.” “Newcomers used Surrey Libraries as a place to read, to study, and to meet with other people. They were more frequent users of a wider range of library services than the library user population (Shepard 588). Improving their English through books, DVDs, conversation or programs was one of the highest responses for newcomers (Shepard 589). Among the others were to build confidence, meet new people and make friends, feel connected to [the] community, and to look for jobs (Shepard 589).

Enacting Reconciliation

The NDP and Liberal parties identify Reconciliation or Indigenous communities’ wellbeing as a strategic priority. The UCP also identifies a need to partner with Indigenous peoples in the economy.

Reconciliation efforts may take these dimensions in libraries:

- **Responding to the TRC Calls to Action, or Decolonization Efforts**
 - [Link to TRC recommendations converted for libraries](#) by CFLA
- **Increasing Indigenous opportunities and prosperity**
- **Linguistic and Cultural Celebration and Preservation** for Indigenous peoples and their cultures/languages which were systematically repressed in history

- Libraries in Canada have their own efforts to support calls for reconciliation, one major effort being the updating of subject heading classification. Many subject headings were created with colonizing frameworks in mind, which unfairly pushes knowledge and information from the past and present into inappropriate boxes that do not truly describe their content. Small groups in the US and Canada are getting together, Indigenous run or with Indigenous guided, to rectify these mis-created labels. Project like Decolonizing Libraries to Foster Community Well-Being in Michigan, or the renaming the Canadian Knowledge Research Network is doing with overarching guidance from Library and Archives Canada (Hinton 1; Bach).
- “In Canada the documentation and revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultural knowledge are increasingly cited as priorities in support of well-being in Indigenous communities” (Wiggin et al. 125). Spaces in public libraries can be created for knowledge sharing—physically in the library like EPL’s PĪYĒSĪW WĀSKĀHIKAN space, or online as seen in their Voice of the Land website (Riddle). Systems and places like these can also foster language and oral history sharing which can raise awareness of Indigenous issues as well as spread authentic understandings and knowledge (Shiri et al. 96).
- In addition to updating the way we discuss and sort knowledge of Indigenous peoples of the past and present, libraries can also open up opportunities for Indigenous people to thrive. A large discrepancy exists between university educated Indigenous people and the total population—29% to 11% respectively—and one of the calls to action is for reducing educational gaps (Statistics Canada). “Indigenous students greatly value services that provide them with community and support, and making campuses more welcoming and inclusive to Indigenous students has been linked to higher educational attainment (Stieglitz 4). Academic libraries are uniquely positioned to create these supports, as their main mandate is to support student populations. They can work to fix the subject headings used to organize their resources, “[consult] with the Indigenous community and [hire] Indigenous staff in order to incorporate Indigenous values into library service,” and provide Indigenous cultural training for their staff (Stieglitz 5).
- “Since 2015 [in Canada], there has been a 55 percent increase in the number of academic programs that ‘include an Indigenous focus or are designed for Indigenous students’ and over 70 percent of institutions have, or are creating, reconciliation plans” (Stieglitz 6).

Integrating Sustainability

All parties note a concern for Alberta’s environment.

- “Two-thirds or more of respondents across regions and library types ranked “Quality Education” (Sustainable Development Goal 4) as their first priority among the SDGs. They report that “Offering training/instruction/classes/courses, etc., for students, faculty and/or staff” and “Providing services and/or facilities specifically for remote learning” are the top activities respondents participate in related to SDG 4.” (OCLC 2).

| SDG | Top academic library activities | | Top public/other library activities | |
|---|---|------------|---|------------|
| SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth | Campus strategic planning | 83% | Job preparedness | 57% |
| | Hosting office space/workspace for other campus departments | 73% | Participate in community strategic planning | 56% |
| SDG 10 Reduced inequalities | Offer programs, services, and collections to promote diversity awareness and education | 82% | Offer services, programs, and collections to promote awareness and education around diversity | 73% |
| | Provide inclusive facilities | 72% | Provide employee training around equity, diversity, and inclusion | 69% |
| SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions | Serve as a welcoming space on campus | 90% | Serve as a welcoming space in the community | 83% |
| | Provide an environment to facilitate engagement between different populations | 73% | Promote active involvement in civic activities | 69% |
| SDG 17 Partnership for the goals | Develop strong partnerships with other libraries and librarians through associations, consortia | 95% | Develop strong partnerships with other libraries and librarians through associations, consortia | 93% |
| | Collaborate with other academic departments or community agencies to provide classes | 77% | Collaborate with other community agencies to provide classes for the community | 75% |

(OCLC 2)

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