

# Library Services

Library branches serve as vital community hubs, making contributions to the leisure, literacy needs, and well-being of Winnipeg communities.

High rates of poverty and a reliance on public spaces for things like internet access and community programming continue to show the need for and investment in new types of library services.

**How can Winnipeg better use library services to address the city's unacceptably high poverty rate?**

## The Alternative Municipal Budget proposes:

### Restoring and Rebuilding

For over a decade Winnipeg Public Library (WPL) has had some of the lowest staffing levels in Canada. In 2019 Winnipeg had 266.7 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions, far below cities of a similar size (e.g., Halifax at 345 FTEs, Edmonton at 445 FTEs and Ottawa at 451 FTEs). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated Winnipeg Public Library's already low staffing levels. In July 2020, the WPL vacancy rate was nearly 30 per cent. The AMB proposes new expenditures toward Library Services, including the increase of FTE positions in Winnipeg Public Libraries. To deliver the full complement of services Winnipeg needs to increase staff by 32 FTEs, spread across a range of positions.

### Expanding Community-Based Services

The AMB also proposes the expansion of community-based services within the City's Library Services, such as the capital purchase of a bookmobile and additional book bikes. Overall, this would result in \$374,000 of new expenditures for equipment and an annual expenditure of \$109,000 for additional staff.

### Expanding Collections

Contributing to information equity by providing access to a wide range of materials across formats is at the core of public library service. Winnipeg falls behind most other comparable cities for the average amount spent on library holdings both electronic and in print per capita at 1.6 holdings per person (the Canadian average is 2.0 per person). The AMB recommends an increase of 10 percent (\$350,000 per year) in the materials budget to help serve

the needs of Winnipeg's population size.

### Supporting Complex Needs

A vital service offered by WPL are Community Crisis Workers, who work out of the Millennium Library and help people connect with social assistance, mental health services, community and housing supports, and more. This is a proactive investment in the community with the potential to lower costs associated with other social services, in addition to police involvement. There are currently only 2 Community Crisis Workers, and they are always in high demand. A new expenditure of \$197,100 would hire 3 additional Community Crisis Workers to be available for the public.

Additionally, the AMB proposes an investment in Community Connections programming (\$20,000 annually) and harm reduction through the expansion of sharp disposal containers in Winnipeg's Public Library washrooms (\$13,600).

### Promoting Libraries to Counter Far-Right Populism

It is important to counter fascist and misinformation movements with education and information. Winnipeg Libraries are perfectly positioned to be part of continued education on the role of democracy, government and providing fact-based information. The Alternative Municipal Budget will allocate \$250,000 for the City of Winnipeg to develop a social media and bus advertising campaign aimed at encouraging Winnipeggers to use Libraries as sources of information and no-cost ways to access books, articles and as gathering spaces.

## Questions for your candidate:

- Will you support hiring three additional Community Crisis workers?
- Will you support increasing the Community Connection space with additional funds for food and harm reduction supplies?
- Will you support increasing the Library Services materials budget by 10% to bring us in line with other cities?

**There are alternatives. Budgets are about choices.**  
See the Alternative Municipal Budget at [policyalternatives.ca](http://policyalternatives.ca)

