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Dr. Diana Davidson, Director
Public Library Services Branch
17th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4

August 16, 2023

Dear Dr. Davidson,

I am writing on behalf of the Shortgrass Library Board to issue a formal request related to the qualifications and knowledge base of individuals serving as public library board trustees in our province. As a regional library system board we are advocates for the governance and enrichment of our municipalities' public libraries, and firmly believe that there is a critical need to implement a mandatory education requirement for board member of municipal library boards.

Our public libraries serve as invaluable community resources, fostering a culture of learning, community engagement, and knowledge dissemination. To ensure the efficient and effective governance of these vital institutions, it is imperative that board trustees charged with their governance are well-informed about their legislative obligations not just as outlined in the Libraries Act and Regulations, but also in other relevant legislation such as for example the Alberta Employment Standards.

A mandatory education requirement for public library board trustees will serve several purposes:

Legal Compliance: Both, the Alberta Libraries Act and Employment Standards outline specific responsibilities and guidelines to which trustees, as employers of library staff, must adhere. By mandating an education requirement, we ensure that all board members are well-versed in the legal framework governing their roles, leading to better decision-making and increased accountability.

Enhanced Governance: Trustees are responsible for shaping the policies and direction of Alberta's public libraries. With a comprehensive understanding of their legislative obligations, they can contribute to more robust governance, strategic planning, and resource allocation, ultimately benefiting library users and the community as a whole.

Transparency and Accountability: A standardized education requirement will promote transparency in the selection process of trustees for municipalities, ensuring that qualified and committed individuals are entrusted with these important positions. Additionally, it will instill a sense of responsibility among trustees to uphold the highest standards of ethics and accountability.

Quality of Library Services: Well-informed trustees will be better equipped to support library staff and management, leading to the development of innovative programs and services that cater to the diverse needs of library patrons and our communities.

The Shortgrass Library Board requests that Public Library Services Branch consider taking the necessary steps to review the current policies governing public library board trusteeship in our province. By collaborating with library stakeholders, policy experts and municipalities, we can design a comprehensive and accessible education program that addresses the key legislative aspects and responsibilities of trusteeship.

We believe that implementing a mandatory education requirement for public library board trustees is an investment in the long-term success of Alberta's public libraries. It is a step towards ensuring that these institutions continue to thrive, adapt to changing community needs, and remain essential pillars of knowledge and community connection.

Thank you for considering this crucial matter. The Shortgrass Library Board would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further or provide any additional information to support its implementation. We are eager to contribute to the improvement of our public library system and remain committed to serving our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Kilpatrick', with a large, sweeping initial 'D'.

Dwight Kilpatrick, Chair
Shortgrass Library Board