

## **City Council Presentation- Friends of the Library January 14, 2013.**

Thank you for the opportunity to address council today. I am the President of the Friends of the London Public Library and I am speaking on their behalf.

The Friends of the London Public Library is a volunteer organization and we are celebrating 20 years of service. The Friends was organized in 1993 with a mandate to raise funds to enhance library programs and collections and to advocate on behalf of the library. It grew out of the belief of interested citizens that the London Public Library is a great civic institution in need of support and volunteer assistance.

We manage the Library Store, the huge annual book sale at the Western Fair District and we partner with the Library for the Book for Every Child campaign. With our members and our volunteers we are over 500 strong and we are committed to the library and the programs and services which it provides.

Today, it is in that second role as advocates that we are speaking in support of the London Public Library proposed budget. The Friends of the Library support the core values of the LPL which include being open and accessible to and providing service to everyone across all demographics and income ranges.

Public Libraries are a bright spot in this economy. Public libraries provide free access to all types of materials - books, music, DVD's, audio books, newspapers, magazines, downloadable audio books and e-books.

Public libraries provide communities with public space, promoting mutual support, social inclusion and civic participation. These economic times can be isolating, and public libraries bring people together in an inclusive, supportive environment. The London Public Library enriches the lives of Londoners through literacy, learning, information, culture, leisure and recreation and is a community meeting place.

Two years ago one of the many letters to the editor of the London Free Press supporting public libraries stated:

“We need a strong library system to be a thriving city.

We need a strong library system as accessible centres for literacy and for a diverse population.

We need a strong library system if we are to be competitive in knowledge based economy. Serious cuts in funding to the libraries may in fact be serious cuts to our economic future.” We agree and those remarks remain true today.

At ReThink London events, Londoners are saying consistently that they want a community that IS a community and where they can connect with each other. The Friends believe that the London Public Library meets that need.

Research has shown that for every \$1 invested, public libraries provide an economic boost of around \$5. That's a remarkable rate of return on investment! And that's only what we can measure in terms of dollars-and-cents. And that \$5 is from a 2009 report. The Friends believe that as part of the return on investment the London Public Library supports a knowledge based community and gives cultural support to the diversity of London. Those are incredible intangibles.

The London Public Library will continue to experience increased demand for its services. They already have the highest usage per capita of all libraries reporting through the OMBI and have one of the lowest costs per use of all of the libraries reporting through the OMBI. And Londoners and the Friends love and need their library. It is the heart of our community.

The Friends believe that the Library and Library Board are forward thinking leaders, efficient and responsive to the changing needs of all patrons. We also believe that the Library is socially responsive, well managed, fiscally accountable, and demonstrates cost-effective use of public funds.

As Friends of the Library we will continue to raise funds for enhancements to the Library's services and programs. These funds, raised entirely by volunteers, can never be considered as core funding. We are counting on you to fund the core services to the level to which this community expects and deserves.

Just one last point about The Friends, we are now using social media. You can like us on Facebook at Friends of the London Public Library or follow us on Twitter at LPL\_Friends. Or if you are so inclined we would welcome you as a member of the Friends.

Thank you for your time and consideration.