



ADVOCACY
at your library

MUNICIPAL ELECTION STRATEGIES

Monday October 16, 2017 is Municipal Election Day in Alberta

● Long live the library!

If someone asks you if libraries are still needed when so much information is available on the Internet, a suggested reply is:

“ *Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life.* - Sidney Sheldon

“ *A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life-raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination. On a cold rainy island, they are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer, but a citizen instead.* - Caitlin Moran

“ *Libraries are about the only free public spaces left in our society where you're not a consumer, pressured to buy something.* - Sandra Singh, librarian

“ *Google can bring you back 100,000 answers, a librarian can bring you back the right one.*” - Neil Gaiman

CONNECT: Start/strengthen relationships with Candidates. You are the best expert on 21st century libraries in your community. You understand how the library fits into the community and what people need from the library to build a satisfying life. You can build the candidate's awareness of and connections to your library and its role in the community. Connect with the media as often as possible to promote the library and the opportunities that the library provides.

● Sample Talking Points / Key Messages / Short Elevator Speech

Explain in a unique way what your library does to support the community.



Our library is a place for opportunity and possibility

- dynamic, flexible gathering place that fosters community connections, offers programs and services that respond to community needs, encourages life-long learning, recreation, literacy, and innovation
- free access to the Internet; hands on technology training
- support for newcomers getting settled in the community
- business support and innovation; volunteer and employment opportunities



Our library is an integral part of the community

- public library's niche is early childhood literacy and school preparedness
- fosters a culture and love of reading, and promotes lifelong learning, for both children and their families
- open to everyone



Our Community is changing

- increasing need to provide collections, services and programs that are culturally inclusive and broaden cultural awareness
- growing use of digital services and need for training
- shifting services to address the different needs of aging populations
- support for initiatives leading to economic diversification

● Ask candidates questions that leave a lasting impression

General questions such as “What do you think about libraries?” can be ineffective and may not lead to future action.

Examples of questions that encourage collaboration and strengthen relationships:

What opportunities are there for Council and the Library Board to work together to better serve the community?

Council has a priority to increase economic development capacity in [name of Town, Village, City]. How do you see the Library supporting that priority?

Having a great library is a draw for new residents to come to [name of Town, Village, City] and an enticement for residents to stay here. How can Council work with the Library Board so that the library continues to be a great library?



● Ideas to build upon

- Get Social! Invite candidates to follow the library. Use social media to promote and share election events happening in your library and beyond the walls
- Host your own candidates’ meeting at the library; this can be formal or more informal — invite the media
- Invite candidates to do a story time program, or help with another program
- Host a “Tea with the Candidates” event in the library
- Invite the candidates to a regular or special board meeting
- Have your teens (the future voters) stage a mock political debate (perhaps invite candidates to watch)
- Collect stories from library patrons of all ages to share with the candidates

● Be prepared & remember to remain politically impartial in all communication

- Follow the candidates on social media to learn about their interests and priorities. Gather information on their backgrounds and interests to establish a personal connection.
- Inquire about the candidates’ knowledge of and vision for public libraries and for your public library in particular.
- Acknowledge the commitment of government regarding public libraries.
- Rather than presenting a long list of services, encourage library advocates to mention how library staff contribute to making a difference in the community. Library trustees provide the strategic direction and play an important role in ensuring that our library meets its financial, legal and community obligations. Staff and volunteers are leaders in ensuring quality services in the community and across Marigold.
- Provide candidates with a success story that illustrates a community-led initiative in your community. Talk about innovative programs that reach out to people or bring people into your library. Talk about increases in memberships and attendance for programs and events. (Ask patrons if they could provide a quote about a program they attended.)
- Mention that your patrons can use their library card in public libraries throughout the Province.