

CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION

# The Calgary Public Library as Partner for Economic Development and Prosperity

WHITE PAPER

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*“For a city to be truly prosperous, it must embrace opportunity for all of its citizens. Opportunity to learn, have new experiences, and challenge themselves. The public library provides those opportunities. For every citizen who uses the public library, we have one more person in this city equipped with the tools to thrive, and—in doing so—make our communities better for all. It’s a simple equation: investment in our public library is an investment in the economic and social prosperity of our city.”*

*Mayor Naheed Nenshi*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Libraries everywhere are becoming hubs for 21st century learning and engines for economic vitality, workforce development and an engaged citizenry. In today's knowledge economy, the Library is ready to support the education of all citizens at every age and level of need. We believe there is no greater investment our society can make for the future than in our children and their learning and development.

The Calgary Public Library is positioning itself to create a lifelong learning system that prepares our city's children, youth and adults to succeed and thrive in the knowledge economy. This white paper will examine five economic development priority areas and how the Calgary Public Library will help to support them to ensure our city's long term competitiveness.

Our vision is to create a "shared value" approach through which corporate partners and the Library address our city's need for human capital development while contributing to the economic development priorities of Calgary, Alberta and Canada.

## THE PROBLEM

### 1. LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

The TD Economics Special Report "Canada's Literacy and Numeracy Challenge Worsens" from December 12, 2013, identifies three issues which could affect Canada's long-term prosperity:

- Canada scored average in literacy and below average in numeracy among OECD nations, with youth (aged 16-24) declining in both proficiencies from recorded results almost 10 years ago;
- specific socioeconomic groups of immigrant and Aboriginal populations continue to underperform in these areas; and,
- the need to tackle Canada's productivity challenge highlights the urgency in addressing the essential skills gap.

## OUR SOLUTION

### EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- a. Chair for Early Childhood Development – applied research for 200,000 annual children and parents
- b. Infrastructure – Early Learning Centres at all community libraries to foster accessible hands-on learning for all. Creation of the best childhood library in the world within the New Central Library
- c. Comprehensive programs and services supporting mental and physical development for all children, and parental skills and support

## 2. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL START-UPS AND SMALL BUSINESS

Canada's small businesses are engines for job creation that boost economic growth, representing 48 per cent of the total labour force in the private sector and contributing approximately 30 per cent to Canada's GDP. Growing this vital economic engine is an imperative for Canada's future prosperity.

Canada is falling short of realizing its entrepreneurial potential. Much more can be done to support the enterprises that are catalysts of Canada's future prosperity.

### OUR SOLUTION

#### BUSINESS INCUBATOR AT NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY

- a. Formalized, accessible workplace setting providing business support services within the New Central Library and prospective purpose-built spaces within the Library network
- b. Expert Library fact-finding services, resources and materials
- c. Entrepreneur-in-Residence to advice, mentor and support
- d. Education through specialized programs including marketing, finance and tax policy
- e. An entrepreneurial culture fostered through mentorship and connection to likeminded people

## 3. VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

One of the most powerful outcomes of a library within a community is empowerment. The Library is an important source of support for many types of vulnerable populations including children, low-income families, persons with disabilities, Aboriginals and the homeless. Libraries play a role in contributing to the reduction of social exclusion and can enable individuals to overcome situational issues such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown—challenges which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Some of the impacts of social exclusion are poor health, low participation rates in the labour market and civil society, frequent involvement with the justice system and addictions.

### OUR SOLUTION

- a. Chair for Lifelong Learning – applied research for adult skill and knowledge development
- b. Participation in the multi-stakeholder Safe Communities Opportunity and Resource Centre (SORCe)
- c. Adult learner and literacy programs
- d. Career and skill development
- e. Digital Literacy in the Community initiative (DLIC)
- f. Sun Life Financial Arts & Culture Pass for low-income Calgarians

#### 4. NEWCOMERS TO CANADA

It is predicted that due to a declining birthrate and an aging population, immigration will, in the near future, account for all of net labour market growth in Canada. The presence of immigrants in Canada is not only a manifestation of Canada's appreciation of diversity, but also a necessity for economic growth.

##### OUR SOLUTION

The Library has undertaken a bold, innovative four-pillar strategy to welcome newcomers to Canada and assist in their successful integration within Calgary:

- a. *Welcome to the Library* supported by RBC Foundation
- b. ESL Language Support
- c. Skills Advancement featuring programs and resources
- d. Framework for social connection and celebration

#### 5. STEAM ENGINE INITIATIVE

The Calgary Public Library is embarking on a comprehensive, system-wide approach to a free, accessible STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Design and Math) initiative for four priority audiences. Our objective is to inspire, foster and support critical thinking skills that are increasingly required to engage and succeed in today's knowledge-based economy.

##### OUR SOLUTION

- a. STEAM catalyst - a global expert to develop the strategic vision for STEAM program development, delivery and evaluation
- b. STEAM Infrastructure - leading technology and resources that are available to all
- c. Free, accessible STEAM programs for four priority audiences: early childhood (0-5); children (6-12); teens (12-17); and adults
- d. Canadian Oil Sands Math Minds for children

## THE BENEFITS

The Calgary Public Library is a logical partner for economic development initiatives that focus on people and quality of life.

- Early Literacy services are a key foundation for long-term economic success
- Newcomers to Canada add to the diversity of our community and contribute to the long-term economic prosperity of our county
- STEAM fosters and supports critical thinking skills that are increasingly required to engage and succeed in our knowledge-based economy
- Business Incubator spaces and access to expert Library fact-finding services, specialized programs, services, mentors and networks reduces barriers and creates an environment for collaboration and business success

## OUR VISION

To create a “shared value” approach through which corporate partners and the Library address Calgary’s need for human capital development while contributing to the economic development priorities of Calgary, Alberta and Canada.

## ABOUT THE CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION

We are at a unique moment in our city’s development with an unprecedented opportunity to create a legacy that will have a profound impact on the lives of Calgarians today and for generations to come. Add In—the Campaign for Calgary’s Library, is a bold, audacious vision to take a great library system and transform it into the best in the world.

In what will be the largest fundraising campaign for a library in Canadian history, Add In will redefine the role of a library in our rapidly-changing society. The campaign is segmented into four categories: Inspiration, Information, Imagination and Innovation. These represent strategic areas in which the Library plans to invest in order to reach the hearts and minds of the millions of Calgarians who turn to us for knowledge, information, programming and community-building.

This \$350 million city-wide campaign will build capacity for each and every community library and will include projects with a strong impact for Library customers. Add In will take a great library and make it exemplary to ensure that the citizens of Calgary have the best public library in the world.

The Calgary Public Library is a bold, new philanthropic choice for Calgarians who wish to leave an enduring legacy in our city. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in developing the kind of library Calgarians need, want and deserve.

## RESEARCH CITATIONS

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- [http://entrepreneurship.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Alexandria-Co-Working-Network\\_20131.pdf](http://entrepreneurship.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Alexandria-Co-Working-Network_20131.pdf)
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### 6. THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN THE KNOWLEDGE AGE

Urban Libraries Council "Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic Development" [http://www.urbanlibraries.org/filebin/pdfs/MakingCitiesStronger\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.urbanlibraries.org/filebin/pdfs/MakingCitiesStronger_Full_Report.pdf)

Public Libraries in the Learning Society –

Guidelines on Open Learning Centres in Public Libraries in Europe [http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDoQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wuerzburg.de%2Fstadt-buecherei%2Fabteilungen%2Fstudio%2Fenglartikel%2Fm\\_11594\\_dl&ei=Zi1IU5HVEKep2gXU3ICwCg&usq=AFQjCNH5-pGyEN5cHNb1RJymfN84docHeA](http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDoQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wuerzburg.de%2Fstadt-buecherei%2Fabteilungen%2Fstudio%2Fenglartikel%2Fm_11594_dl&ei=Zi1IU5HVEKep2gXU3ICwCg&usq=AFQjCNH5-pGyEN5cHNb1RJymfN84docHeA)

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