

PRESENTATION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS -
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST, 1985

Gentlemen:

We are here representing the County of Elgin to furnish information and answer any questions concerning our proposed Private Members Bill. I would like to introduce Warden Ray Lavereau and I am George Leverton, Clerk-Treasurer.

As you gentlemen are no doubt aware, the County Library System is administered by a Library Board established under Part IV of the Public Libraries Act. It provides for a total of 7 members composed of the Warden and 6 members appointed by County Council, 3 of which shall be members of County Council, and 3 who are residents of the County and are not members of the Council.

Elgin County operates 11 branch libraries with the Administration Headquarters located in St. Thomas in the basement of leased quarters in the City Library Building. If I may be permitted, I would like to briefly outline the reasons why the County has requested the private bill to alter the present provisions of the Public Libraries Act.

1. ACCOUNTABILITY

Although the present system has members of Council on the Board, and in the majority (4 out of the 7) the balance of the persons appointed are not accountable to the public at large for their decisions, be it financial or policy. Recommendations brought from the Library Board require the 4 members to convince the other 21 members of Council that the particular item is desirable. It is proposed that the Committee, if allowed, would be composed of 5 members of Council plus the Warden Ex-Officio. Any report or action to Council will have 6 representatives to speak in support of it. All other functions of the County, Roads, Homes for the Aged, Social Services, Personnel, Property etc. are under the Committee Structure System. Therefore, it is logical that this function also should be under County Council, and not a separate Board.

2. FINANCIAL

The cost of operating the Library system has increased considerably in recent years. To illustrate the rate of increase, the operating budget for 1970 was \$113,834, of which the County contributed \$69,052. The current 1985 operating budget plus an additional amount for capital is \$811,550, of which the County contribution is \$751,320. You can readily see that the County contribution is in excess of 10 times what they were contributing in 1970, indicating the increased costs which are associated with the library system. Part of the problem, of course, is that the contribution by the Province is less percentage-wise than it was in 1970. Within the last five years the County has contributed financially towards either the renovation or construction of four local libraries. It is anticipated more will follow in the coming years to upgrade or construct new quarters. The circulation in these new facilities has increased drastically, indicating the apparent need for the improved buildings. By changing to a Committee of Council capital programs for these expenditures can be monitored and considered along with all other upcoming projects in the various functions of the County.

STAFF AND QUARTERS

As indicated previously, the Administration is presently housed in the City Library Building, and the employees equate their benefits and wages with those of the city staff. At the present time we are renovating a newly-acquired building (former Nurses' Residence at the St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital) as a County Administration Building. It is our plan to move all County departments, including the library into this building in December of this year.

Although the Board has been a separate entity, attempts have been made to keep wages and benefits comparable to the balance of the County staff. In July of this year, the six full time staff applied for and obtained certification to be represented by C.U.P.E. Negotiations are presently under way towards the first collective agreement. By moving into a new building with other County staff and under a Committee structure, it will allow continuity in wage negotiations. Presently there are three other union agreements and an association one being negotiated by the County Personnel Committee. A separate board, such as presently in place, is not fully aware of the provisions and working conditions in the other departments. The Personnel Committee is in possession of this information.

SUMMARY

1. Accountability - A Committee-structured system will result in what we feel will be a governing body which is more accountable to both Council and the electorate.
2. Financial - For the increasing cost, both operating and capital, it is felt that projections for future years may be better monitored and planned through a Committee composed entirely of elected members of County Council, based on priority and need of the entire County operation.
3. Staff and Quarters - With the Library staff in a building with strictly other County employees and subject to working conditions etc. negotiated by the same Committee, dealing with all other staff groups, the end result will serve the County's needs better.

We would welcome any questions you may have, and we respectfully ask that our private bill to alter the current Library Administration be given favourable consideration.

Respectfully submitted,