



Dear Friend of READ Saskatoon,

This year saw exciting changes and new beginnings for READ Saskatoon. It was also a year of strengthening internally at a time when uncertainty in our province seems to be at its peak.

As I reflect on what we have accomplished this year, I considered what we had set out to do in our 2016 Strategic Plan:

- **Grow** to meet our community's growing needs.
- **Sustain** our organization's viability and relevancy.
- **Strengthen** our internal environment to create an exceptional place to work and serve the community.

Grow Our Capacity. Our community is growing and changing, and READ Saskatoon must grow its capacity to meet our community's needs. This means ensuring we have a welcoming space that encourages learners, families, and community partners to work together, and the funding we need to make it happen.

As a READ Saskatoon board member for the last five years, I have seen the organization grow and mature in many ways, and the 2017 year was truly a highlight of my time with the organization. At one of my first board meetings, we discussed the issue of office location for READ and how we struggled to secure affordable work space that was i) convenient for our stakeholders and ii) provided the necessary resources for our learners and volunteers.

I am so proud to say that this year we moved into our new space at Central Park Common on Duchess Street.

We are so thankful to everyone who made this happen: we have special thanks to give to Charles Olfert at AODBT Architecture + Interior Design; Mike & Rhonda Stensrud at Miners Construction; Braid Flooring; the Saskatoon Community Foundation; anonymous donors, and Hy-Grade Millwork. Our Executive Director and staff all rolled up their sleeves and pitched in on moving day. Everyone played a part in making this dream a reality and we can see the difference the new space is having on the organization. The new space is everything we dreamed of, with great accessibility, a central common room for tutors and learners to meet; a board room; office space; and shared space with our new neighbours, the MS Society, and the Arthritis Society.

With the new space came a chance to refresh and rebrand. We held a grand opening on September 22, where the focus was to engage within our new neighbourhood, and to use the opportunity to connect with key stakeholders. We were pleased to be joined by long-time volunteers, donors, clients, and government of Saskatchewan's Deputy Premier and Minister of Education, the Honourable Don Morgan, who addressed more than 100 guests at the grand opening, which included tours of the facility.

And with the new space came opportunity. Opportunity to reach out to our stakeholders. Opportunity to reach out to community members. Opportunity to re-engage with volunteers, potential donors, and to refresh our fund development strategy. We used our new space as a chance to welcome people into our new home, explain why READ Saskatoon is so relevant to our community, and to engage them in our work.

Sustain our Viability and Relevancy: We believe that the best way to support our community is to improve our existing programs, expand volunteer opportunities, collaborate with a variety of organizations, and create new programs to promote lifelong learning to an even broader audience.

Fundraising. We continued with our main fundraisers: the PGI Golf Tournament was held in August at Saskatoon Golf and Country Club, and *Lit Up!* was held in March at the Sheraton Cavalier. Our Speed Scrabble event moved to April in Louis' Loft at the University of Saskatchewan. We were also able to hold a new fundraising event: on April 10, Literature and Literacy and collided for the good of the community as READ hosted "Telling Stories and Story Telling," which featured local authors and musical talents at the Broadway Theatre. I continue to be amazed by the organizing committees of these events, who, year after year, raise the bar and with that, raise more funds to support the programming of READ Saskatoon. Without these events, many of the agency's activities would not be possible.

Programming. READ Saskatoon continued to focus on our core programs: Adult Literacy, Family Literacy, and Financial Literacy. We also embarked on a new children's tutoring pilot initiative with Saskatoon Public Schools and the Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation. The feedback from this initiative was very positive, and we hope to expand this programming in the future.

Strengthening our Internal Environment: We believe that creating an exceptional place to work and serve the community is the best way to ensure ongoing and lasting strength in our organization. We will enhance our ability to be a strong community partner and advocates for change through board and staff mentorship, leadership development, cultural competency education, and succession planning.

From a strategic perspective, the Board braced for what we thought could be a bumpy ride this year. Uncertainty in our provincial funding forced us to stay focused and relevant. The Board set out to develop a government relations strategy to i) ensure our provincial

government understands that many of READ's goals are in common with the goals of the province, and ii) to demonstrate how our work has a direct impact on the community.

The Board focused on mitigating other risks, such as in the area of succession planning for both key positions within the agency as well as with the Board of Directors. The Board developed a succession plan and guiding policy that can be implemented for years to come. The Board also focused on board recruitment, ensuring that our Board is well positioned for the future, with strong leadership and a diverse set of skills to meet READ Saskatoon's growing needs.

READ Saskatoon works with over 3,500 individuals a year, and since 1979, READ Saskatoon has provided literacy leadership, programming and service support to the community. Although the landscape of the city has changed over the years, we remain committed to results-based programs and take pride in continuous improvement. Although change is inevitable, we remain committed to our core beliefs:

Everyone has the right to learn, regardless of age.

Strong literacy skills are not attained by chance.

Communities have the right to responsive and effective literacy programs that are attended to with diligence.

Lifelong habits contribute to strong and resilient communities.

Thank you for supporting literacy. Thank you for supporting READ Saskatoon.

Lisa Dunville
Chair of READ Saskatoon Board of Directors 2016-17