Federation of ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES
La Fédération des BIBLIOTHÈQUES PUBLIQUES DE L'ONTARIO

Feb. 13, 2017

The Honourable Charles Sousa
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1

Dear Minister Sousa:

RE: Ontario 2017 Pre-Budget Consultations

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions for the development of Ontario's provincial budget aims and priorities.

We represent Ontario's public libraries. The **Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)** represents Ontario's over 300 public library systems exceeding 1,000 branches in virtually every Ontario community. Over 5 million Ontario residents make hundreds of millions of visits to the library, in person and virtually, *every* year. Libraries are trusted, accessible community hubs providing freely accessible professional service, technology, programs, and resources to a more diverse range of residents than any other cultural institution. 74% of Ontarians have voted with their library cards with passionate support for public libraries that continues to grow in the digital age.

Using the Ontario Government's statistical data, Ontario's Public Library systems we have the biggest institutional footprint in every Ontario community and are growing very fast:

> **155.8 Million Visits per year**
> **426,849 Visits per day**
> **17,785 Visits per hour**
> **296 Visits per minute!**
>
> *Yes – that's almost 6 visits to a public library every second of every day in Ontario!*
>
> **Ontario's Libraries offer over 242,000 programs per year, attended by over 4.2 million people! The number of these programs and attendance has almost doubled in the past decade.**

74% of Ontario residents of all ages and demographics report using their library and having a library card.
Public Libraries are growing in importance and remain vital to Ontario's communities.

Our sector is strongly supportive of a wide range of this government's consultation and policy initiatives including your initiatives with respect to Community Hubs, Culture Strategy, Indigenous communities, social isolation and a wide range of digital education and infrastructure initiatives. **We know that Public Libraries will make a strong partners to ensure the success of these challenging areas as long as we can do this with adequate funding.**

However, the pattern of the past twenty years regarding provincial government support is contradictory. **The Net Present Value (spending power) of $33 million Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG) in 1996 has declined over 20 years to $14 million in current dollars.**

The provincial government's support of Ontario's public libraries has declined every year since the cuts of the 1990's. This has happened in an environment of successful Public Library digital transformation and they remain one of the top most respected public institutions in our Province.

There are several facts that need to be documented here:

1.   The Provincial Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG) was cut 50% in the mid-nineties to approximately $33 million.
2.   There have been no changes to this lower rate grant for over <u>two decades</u> – not even cost of living increases.
3.   The PLOG is widely perceived by municipalities and some libraries as unfair since it has not fully taken into account population changes.
4.   While several targeted grant opportunities were offered in the last decade these are now mostly sun-setting with no confidence that they will re-appear. Recent cuts included:
   * e-Resources funding grant ceased at Dec. 31, 2015 - $2.3 million
   * Connectivity funding prior to Dec. 31, 2016 - $400,000
The following grants are up for review, renewal or sun-setting:
   * OLCF Funding - $10 million over 3 years sunsets on March 31, 2017
   * Connectivity funding was cut in 2016 and is in review with no commitment yet.
   * CELA funding for print challenged is in review with no commitment - $900,000
Provincial funding of Ontario's public Libraries has declined from 10% of their budgets to 1-4% now while Ontarians expectations have increased and government support expectations too.

While we appreciate and apply for grants with gratitude, these do not ensure sustainability for important programs and institutions as our sector transforms itself to adapt to the digital 21st Century.

To be clear, Ontario's mostly municipally funded Public Library systems have been delivering support for provincial initiatives since they began. Against a backdrop of a provincial government that prioritizes education (early years, school readiness, homework help, college preparedness), employment, Business and entrepreneurial success, cost efficiency and effectiveness, Social isolation, New Canadians and refugees, e-government, indigenous reconciliation, and digital initiatives, Ontario's Public Libraries are exemplars of the best way to support these programs at the community level and to bridge the digital divide and provide equity of access for all on a cost-effective basis.

We are aware of the Public Library Program Finding Review initiated as a result of Ontario's First Culture Strategy as well as other initiatives including Community Hubs. It is reaching a crisis to address all of the

new programs and community and resident and voter expectations of libraries. Our libraries are bursting at the seams and underfunded as municipalities continue to take on the lion's share of funding. The Provincial government must address this in advance of any funding review.

Our key recommendation is that an immediate doubling of the Provincial Library Operating Grant by $30 million in the April Provincial Budget will take some of the heat off as we continue to support Ontario residents. This will only repair the long term under-funding and prepare us to address modernizing the province's relationship with municipalities and their public library systems over the coming year.

The attached submission represents our best priority recommendations to advise your budget process. We know that libraries are a key tool and lever to improve the fortunes and success of all Ontarians. A fair society requires equitable access to information resources, technologies and programs for all communities. At this point there is **inequitable** access across Ontario to the resources needed to live, work, play and learn in this province - especially beyond the big urban centres in our rural, small town, northern, remote, First Nation, and francophone communities. This Budget is an opportunity to step up to the plate to address these inequities.

We sincerely hope that these recommendations influence the course of your Ministry's deliberations, since we know that libraries in Ontario are key foundation supports for many of the priorities of your government to ensure the success of Ontario and all Ontario residents – while maintaining a climate of fiscal prudence.

We remain ready to provide you, Cabinet, and all Ministry teams with the supporting information you need to address our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Stephen Abram

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Minister Eleanor McMahon, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

Recommendations for Strengthening the Public Libraries of Ontario

Ontario 2017 Pre-Budget Consultations Submission from

The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries

Submitted to:

The Honourable Charles Sousa
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1

FOPL Recommendations to Ontario's Minster of Finance regarding the Pre-Budget Consultations

About Us:

We represent Ontario's public libraries. The **Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)** represents Ontario's over 300 public library systems exceeding 1,000 branches in virtually every Ontario community. Over 5 million Ontario residents make hundreds of millions of visits to the library, in person and virtually, *every* year. Libraries are trusted, accessible community hubs providing freely accessible professional service, technology, programs, and resources to a more diverse range of residents than any other cultural institution. 74% of Ontarians have voted with their library cards with passionate support for public libraries that continues to grow in the digital age. We bridge the divide and offer equity of access for all.

Our Recommendations

This submission represents our best recommendations to advise your budget process. We know that libraries are a key tool to improve the fortunes and success of all Ontarians and offer great leverage for government policy. A fair society requires equitable access to information resources, technologies and programs for all communities. At this point there is inequitable access across Ontario to the resources needed to live, work, play and learn in this province - especially beyond the big urban centres - in our rural, small town, northern, remote, First Nations, and francophone communities. **This Budget is an opportunity to address these inequities.**

Context:

Ontario's libraries used the following principles for creating these recommendations:

1. We want to ensure that ALL Ontarians have equitable access to information and support for learning, work and play to underpin their success.
2. We want to ensure that digital resources support in Ontario moves to the next level and does so in the best way possible to support the government's goals for effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. This includes the principle in a number of the Premier's mandate letters for greater inter-ministerial cooperation and de-duplication of effort.
3. We want to ensure that under-served communities in Ontario are brought up to a provincial standard that ensures that Ontarians in First Nation, francophone, rural, and remote areas have equitable access that ensures their success in school, economically and in life.
4. We want to place Ontario's libraries as desirable partners in key provincial government strategies in education, culture, community hubs, new Canadians, and economic infrastructure.

There are several facts that need to be documented here:

5.	The Provincial Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG) was cut 50% in the mid-nineties.
6.	There have been no changes to this lower rate grant for over <u>two decades</u> – not even cost of living increases.
7.	The PLOG is widely perceived by municipalities and some libraries as unfair since it has not fully taken into account population changes.
8.	While several targeted grant opportunities were offered in the last decade these are now mostly sun-setting with no confidence that they will re-appear.
9.	Recent cuts included:
- e-Resources funding grant ceased at Dec. 31, 2015 - $2.3 million
- Connectivity funding prior to Dec. 31, 2016 - $400,000
10.	The following grants are up for review, renewal or sun-setting in the 2017 Budget:
- OLCF Funding - $10 million over 3 years through March 31, 2017
- Connectivity funding
- CELA funding - $900,000+

While we appreciate and apply for short-term grants with gratitude, these do not ensure sustainability for important programs and institutions as our sector transforms itself to adapt to the digital 21st Century. The role that county, First Nation, and municipal Public Library systems play to ensure that Ontario residents can access the wealth of knowledge and learning in this province should not be undervalue as a support to the government and the 60% cut in Provincial support over 20 years, despite strong growth in usage, is unsustainable.

The Net Present Value (spending power) of $33 million in 1996 has declined over 20 years to $14 million.

The provincial government's PLOG support of Ontario's public libraries has declined every year since the cuts of the 1990's.

Recommendations Executive Summary:

Each of these recommendations is outlined in more detail after this summary.

1. **Increased, mandatory, sustainable funding for school libraries** and staff to support the provincial and community expectation about the role of public libraries in their success. We are the most used optional community resource with 74% of Ontarians using us daily to annually. A Doubling of the Provincial Library Operating Grant in this budget would have a positive impact on Ontarians and would go a long way to meeting the stated vision of the Ontario government's priorities.

2. **Restoration of the funding for e-resources** to public libraries as well as increased funding through a partnership between the relevant ministries to support education in this province. Public Libraries are a key piece of the infrastructure for continuous learning, early literacy, homeschooling and independent learning and K-12 homework. Research on the positive impact of libraries on Early Years / Early Literacy / Early Learning is clear. Despite this fact, all e-resources funding for public libraries has been sunsetted in 2015 by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The Ministry of

Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should recognize that their path to student success must involve funding and programs for the only accessible digital information infrastructure delivered equitably in every Ontario community. A joint funding program for digital resources that crosses the boundaries between schools and public libraries is needed to address the needs of ALL Ontario communities. This has the added effect of reducing the cost per learner and ensuring effective use throughout Ontario.

3. **Eligibility for infrastructure funding** for public libraries to renovate, build new branches, and become fully AODA compliant is needed now. Libraries are a provable economic engine in our communities. The budget process should consider ensuring that these vital 21st Century local institutions are ready for their communities by ensuring that public libraries are wholly eligible for "green" funding, heritage renovations, AODA compliance, and social infrastructure programs, grants, and funding.

4. **Public libraries are key culture** and **community hubs** and deliver a very wide range of programs and activities as well as supporting Canadian authors and creators. This role should be recognized in funding eligibility and the need for new programs to ensure that grassroots artists, performers and artisans are funded beyond Ontario's large premier institutions. As noted in our submission to the government's First Culture Strategy, Public Libraries in Ontario are the LARGEST Cultural Institution by attendance by far.

5. **Public libraries are Ontario's primary community hubs**. As such they contribute to the delivery of the Ontario government's goals for e-government, policy and program delivery, education, and the attendant savings and productivity. Public libraries should be considered in all government funding and priorities as key partners in the delivery of provincial government policy goals. (For example, many public libraries are already delivering programs for new Canadians and refugees and have a long track record of positive success with Early Years and Employment programs.) Increasingly some families are able to receive access to innovative culture, creativity, innovation and learning technologies such as 3D printers, drones, programmable robots, etc. These are hands-on learning opportunities that ought to be available to all and align with the STEAM education goals as well as develop creative spaces in every community. Almost one-third of Ontario's libraries have built maker spaces.

Recommendation No. 1: Leveraging and Providing E-Resources for All Ontario Students

Restoration of the funding for e-resources to public libraries as well as increased funding through a partnership between the relevant ministries to support education and students in this province. Public Libraries are a key piece of the infrastructure for continuous learning, early literacy, homeschooling and independent learning and K-12 homework. Research on the positive impact of libraries on Early Years / Early Literacy / Early Learning is clear. Despite this fact, all funding for public libraries has come solely through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should recognize that their path to student success must involve funding and programs for the only accessible information infrastructure in every Ontario community. A joint funding program for digital resources that crosses the boundaries between schools and public libraries is needed to address the needs of ALL Ontario communities.

Access to Information for Ontarians: Leveraging and Providing E-Resources for All Ontario Students seamlessly through public and school libraries.

E- Resources such as online subscription databases are an important resource supporting research, student projects and the curriculum. Regional and province wide collaborative negotiation and purchasing amongst school, academic, and public libraries is standard practice in a number of jurisdictions across Canada and results in considerable savings and broader, more ubiquitous access for students and parents. In Ontario there are a common set of e-resources that are suitable for both school and public library access as they support classroom teaching, homework requirements and life-long learning. **However, Ontario does not currently have a province-wide strategy for leveraging costs and licensing databases across all school boards and public libraries.**

The consequences of this is that students in Ontario – through their school and public libraries do not have the foundation of quality, digital resources they require to succeed. This is exacerbated by the inequities of larger school boards having better resources while the majority of schools often lack the minimum resources necessary to deliver curriculum and prepare our students for the 21st Century.

With this budget, the Ontario government has the opportunity to eliminate these gaps and create a strong foundation for all school and public libraries to support curriculum, research and homework. This would mirror leading jurisdictions in Canada (e.g. Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan and the U.S. (e.g. Ohio, Wyoming, etc.) that have made the transition to hybrid digital and physical libraries in their schools and public libraries.

E-Resources in libraries take two shapes: libraries license large vaults of content (i.e. articles, reference materials, information, and streaming media) in database form or acquire individual or collections of e-books (fiction and non-fiction).

Province-wide access to a common set of core e-resources offers all students a level of equity. Unfortunately, December 31, 2015, marked the end of additional Ministry funds for library access ($2 million + annually) to many e-resources. This represents a loss of over $2 million in a time when we should be doubling down on digital content strategies and reducing inequities between urban/suburban centres and rural/town/remote public libraries and school boards who do not share the economies of scale for digital delivery. Rural and northern students are most affected.

Digital Success and Inclusion: Ubiquitous access to digital learning, learning resources and leveraging public investment. We need to ensure all Ontario residents have equitable access to quality digital resources – learning, e-books, articles, databases, streamed media, video, audio, and more. Public Libraries are leaders in this space by far but the mosaic of resources in individual communities can vary too widely depending on the financial abilities of the local community. There is not seamless or equitable access to most types of digital experiences needed by Ontarians. For example:

K-12 Success: Database licensing of digital articles, research material, streamed media, and e-books that are required to support the curricular needs and success of our K-12 students is a patchwork quilt. There are large inequities between larger urban communities and smaller or more rural communities. For the most part database resources for schools are licensed at the local board level with a small set of province-wide database resources provided through OSAPAC (at this time limited to 3 products: Britannica Online; BookFlix; Learn360; Naxos Music) and there is no real provincial leadership for licensing a suite of resources of articles and e-books that ensures every student in Ontario has access in their community - seamlessly from home, school, their school library and a seamless experience at their Public Library for 24/7 access to homework, project and learning support - especially for those students who do not have full digital access at home with the learning supports delivered by trained public and school library staff.

Digital learning is now a key requirement of society requiring support for a provincial initiative to ensure that Ontarians have 24/7 access to learning that supports their goals. Examples are Lynda.com that can deliver hundreds of free technology training classes to Ontarians through Public Libraries or hundreds of courses available (e.g. Gale Courses) to support adult and student learners in their acquisition of life, work, business and play/hobby skills.

Approximately 24% of Ontarians do not have access to the web at home or at work. The province has the infrastructure already (with some accommodations) to accomplish this through the already full-formed Public Library collaboration agencies (SOLS/OLS-North) and several key consortia in the Higher Ed space (OCUL).

Recommendations:

- Collaborative and consortial purchasing/licensing of databases and learning resources at the provincial level. Both the public and school library sectors require access to online databases (research, reading and career resources). The public library sector created a consortial purchasing model facilitated by Southern Ontario Library Services (SOLS) to leverage resources and access across the province. Teacher Librarians from 30 school boards recognized the need for many of the same resources for school use, contacted SOLS and arranged for inclusion. In the first year, the costs for school boards actually came down. Greater access, efficiency, and savings will be realized if schools can negotiate with this consortium at the provincial level via the Ministry of Education (rather than one school board at a time).

- Recognize the key role Public Libraries play in Distance Education strategies. Indeed, it appears that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is encouraging the development of far more e-learning courses in our colleges and universities and the Ministry of Education is studying various options for an online high school curriculum delivered digitally and the potential to not recognize the role Public Libraries play in supporting Ontario residents is risky. As noted above, approximately 24% of Ontarians do not have access to the web at home or at work.

Digital Learning Strategies: The Ontario Common Curriculum – understanding the online learning and training needs for Ontarians

STEM and STEAM positioning in our learning goals from K-12 and in Higher Ed are major thrusts of government policy. Public and School Libraries are strong adopters and implementers of key initiatives with magnet environments like IDEALabs, Makerspaces, Digital Innovation Hubs, and more. These spaces in Public Libraries and many school libraries support our goals to create a more STEM literate population and encourage learners to choose STEM careers. They also support local business as well. Examples abound with the internationally known IDEALab in Cambridge Public Library, Innisfil Public Library's Hacker Lab and Digital Media Lab, Sudbury Public Library's *Makerspace*, and Toronto Public Library's Digital Innovation Hubs. All of these spaces support business, school, hobby and lifelong learning activities that offer support for STEM, STEAM and digital career and education exploration.

The Ontario Common Curriculum's emphasis on the flipped classroom, critical thinking, inquiry-based and experiential learning puts added strain on school and public libraries and library staff and this is not being fully addressed in a comprehensive fashion. There is a guideline for digital and information literacy curriculum but there needs to be firmer standards – not guidelines – for school libraries, for the role of Public Libraries, and the importance of digital literacies and information fluency as graduation outcomes.

Public Libraries have stepped up to the plate but there has been inadequate training in supporting the education goals and understanding the needs of our learners in the curriculum context as they study, prepare reports and presentations, and need the evening and weekend services of Public Library infrastructure to succeed. The Swiss cheese access to the web, digital resources, equipment and support across Ontario's communities creates an inequity that is dangerous and unsustainable for Ontario's long term social and economic success.

Recommendations:
- Build Public Libraries into education strategies in this province. Recognize this through joint funding (since it is more cost-effective) and ensure that School Libraries and educators are allied with Public Library strategies.
- Increase bandwidth in rural communities to facilitate access to learning, resources and communication across the province.

- Create training and program development opportunities for school library staff and public librarians to deliver homework and curricular support at a higher scale.
- Protect the school library positions in all of our schools – where they have proven impact on student performance – and ensure that school administrators understand the value of these key contributors.

Purchasing at the provincial (versus board) level will result in considerable savings and ensure equitable access for students across the province.

Recommendation:

1. It is recommended that OSAPAC and SOLS receive a funding envelope to develop a purchasing strategy including assessment and analysis, and a means of coordinated planning and purchasing in order to leverage negotiation, costs, and access across both public libraries and schools for resources, and to investigate further opportunities for licensing and cost reduction.
2. **We request that the purchase of common databases be funded via one funding envelope for both public and school sectors at the provincial level for all schools and public libraries to reduce cost.**

The context for consortial e-purchasing in Ontario:

For more than 10 years, and until December 2015, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has provided various levels of funding to support consortial purchasing of e-resources for public libraries. Public Library staff report that most of these e-resources have been excellent support for student homework, but that there is a demand for these resources in the classroom and in the school library. In addition, and as noted above, Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS), an agency of the Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport, agreed to coordinate purchasing and negotiations in conjunction with The Association of Library Consultants of Ontario (TALCO) for 30 school boards for a common set of e-resources (the resources noted above), to help reduce costs.

Further, **college and university library staff report that there is an expectation that students be familiar with using e-resources** such as Gale and EBSCO information products upon entry to post-secondary education. Currently, 80% of Ontario's students who did not have access at their school to these types of e-products, now no longer have access at their public library.

With funding and staffing in decline in school libraries in Ontario, public libraries are doing a lot to support learning and homework. A nominal investment resulting in a cross-ministry strategy (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and Ministry of Education) to support e-resources will provide ubiquitous access and provide a level of opportunity for all of Ontario's students, particularly for smaller and more rural communities. We estimate the overall cost savings realized by a provincial strategy will be up to 35% if a common set of resources are collaboratively purchased for both sectors.

Recommendation No. 2:

Increased, mandatory, sustainable funding for public libraries

The Ontario Government's commitment to Public libraries has declined over twenty years – despite public library systems growth and their amazing transformational adaptation to the digital juggernaut.

1. Leverage and maximize the impact of the provincial investment in the capacity of Ontario's public libraries.
We recommend that a portion of provincial funding be targeted at the provincial level to leverage partnerships and efficiencies so that at the local level public libraries can be more focussed on the unique needs of their communities. When common services and efficiencies are developed cost effectively at the provincial level and then disseminated to communities, everyone benefits. Duplication of effort and expenditure at local levels is eliminated. This can ensure that all public libraries share in an equitable, quality standard of service across the province. Specifically, provincial support for strengthening public libraries should consider:

    1.1   Use the OLSs (SOLS and OLS-North) more effectively to maximize service delivery for the Ministry and increase funding for improved capacity for effective province-wide, cross-sector e-resources licensing, grant management, and provincial data collection. Ensure equity of service, regional needs and interests are recognized and funded adequately through the province to meet the needs of different systems. In particular, this would mean an increase in funding to support collaborative acquisition, cloud ILS, e-resources licensing and delivery, training capacity, and virtual library solutions that cost-effectively provide equity of access for all communities. This is especially crucial for Indigenous communities, and small, rural and remote libraries. The benefit of collaboration is in the attendant reduction in costs per Ontario resident and learners and more effective and efficient expenditure of public dollars.

    1.2   Continue to consult with provincial library and municipal (AMO, ROMA) associations that support Ontario's public libraries on funding decisions or strategies. These organizations look forward to working with public libraries to leverage ideas and provide input to policies and funding for financial and program supports.

    1.3   Restore sustained investment in provincial purchasing of e-resources. Lead inter-ministerial coordination where purchasing efficiencies can be realized. The Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport has traditionally supported and invested in province wide consortial purchasing of e-resources for public libraries. Ontario's elementary and high schools, colleges and universities all purchase e-resources and software. We recommend a study to evaluate collaborative acquisition and the cost savings, equity of access, and efficiencies across library sectors to avoid duplication of expense, and to ensure all Ontarians have seamless and equitable access to the resources they need.

1.4   Ontario's public library sector must have access to and use data effectively to provide services that are timely and relevant to their communities. The Ministry has supported an extensive quantitative data set which has helped libraries monitor their programs, services and expenditures and to benchmark against other library systems. We recommend an investment in a user-friendly data management system that can pre-populate relevant data, seamlessly intake data, and provide data reports in <u>real-time</u> so that libraries can effectively plan and benchmark in a timely manner.

1.5   Investigate a province wide open data plan supporting the needs of the non-profit and public sector and to include free access to statistics Canada data, specifically the long form census data so that we can appropriately plan powerful community impacts and government policy alignment.

1.6   We encourage investment in a solution that simplifies the reporting system for our smaller, rural, remote, and Indigenous public libraries. We propose that the ministry issue an RFI/RFP for data collection and analysis to examine this issue.

1.7   Greater provincial support for quality next generation broadband access and bandwidth to support access to culture. Libraries are positioned now as digital hubs. People use libraries to access digital resources such as music, films, magazines, programming, and recording, all of which requires greater broadband capacity at the public library. We recommend that connectivity funding be increased to support capacity in communities and libraries to enable Ontarians to have full access to online library services at home and in the library.

1.8   Given the provincial government commitment to equitable access for people with print disabilities (vision loss, learning or perceptual), make a new and <u>sustained</u> investment in province-wide access to the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) to ensure persons with disabilities fully participate in culture. This grant has always been separate from the PLOG and should remain so.

1.9   Currently the public library operating grant is apportioned on old population numbers resulting in inequitable distribution. The goal of the operating grant was to intentionally deal with the issues faced by small, rural, and First Nations libraries through a formula that recognized this with equalization payments.   We recommend that the government ensure that operating grants appropriately reflect these differences and the population changes over time (including seasonal population changes). Apply a mechanism for ensuring smaller (rural and remote) and Indigenous communities, which have high needs and are not growing, remain adequately funded. Recognize the very large role urban libraries, which support the majority of Ontarians, play in serving the vast majority of Ontarians and ensure a funding formula applied consistently across the province based on recent population statistics. Do not negatively impact large urban funding as the large majority of Ontario residents are served by complex, large urban library systems. Note that several large urban systems

have many rural populations and service points after the megacity mergers of the 90's. Keep the philosophy that funding for rural, remote and indigenous libraries were founded as equalization payments/grants to ensure equity of access for all Ontarians regardless of the size of their communities. Another complexity is that County library systems may have larger populations but be very rural and quite large geographically. This also needs to be considered.

1.10   Ensure that the conditions for operating and special grants do not enable municipalities to reduce local contributions as a result of provincial support, but encourage greater investment at the local level.

1.11   Review the process for accessing the funding for adjacent communities, counties, and local reserves to ensure more effective access (remove barriers and complexity) to library services and reporting.

2. Invest in the public library infrastructure to strategically support Ontario's culture strategy priorities.

Public library access exists for 98% of Ontario residents and we are important partners in supporting the culture strategy. We recommend that investing in government partnerships with public libraries will strengthen Ontario's overall capacity in culture, employment and education.

For example:

2.1 A provincial approach to supporting families and their children in education. Libraries have a strong role to play in early years, school and post-secondary readiness, STEM and STEAM learning and can work with local school boards to support students after school for cultural programming homework and in the summer. (Recommended partner ministries: Education, Children and Youth Services)

2.2 Given that a significant minority (up to 25%) of Ontarians do not have broadband access at home, libraries play a key role in ensuring equity. Government strategies to increase online learning in post-secondary, secondary and employment contexts require funding recognition for software, equipment, connectivity and staffing to support these important government capacity issues (Partner Ministries: Adult Education and Skills Development, Education).

2.3 Ontario's public libraries are the largest purchasers of Canadian content in print and digitally and our role as a market for Canadian content ensures that there is a market. An investment in public libraries ensures a cultural gateway for access to Canadian produced culture (authors, film-makers, artists, performers, poets, indigenous culture).

2.4 A provincial program for libraries that supports immigration, refugee and newcomer priorities (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration partnership).

2.5 Infrastructure investment in libraries complying with AODA requirements. A significant number of libraries have AODA compliance issues that remain as unfunded liabilities at the municipal and library board level. We recommend a sector specific funding program for ensuring AODA compliance to the new standards.

2.6 Consider moving beyond tactical funding of Indigenous libraries for staffing and operations and engage in federal/provincial cooperation to ensure that all reserves have the facilities, staff, technology and resources required for community engagement and learning. (Federal Government: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)

2.7 Canada's digital cultural heritage is at risk for digital conservation and preservation and access is often overly local. We recommend an investment in funding to support digitization partnerships with archives, museums, local history and arts organizations for Ontario heritage access.

2.8 Given the Public Library's key role in access and training for employment opportunities (including the cultural sector) and as a significant support for student volunteer hours, we recommend an investment in staffing and resourcing that results in youth employment, training and awareness of cultural initiatives and programming.

2.9 Funding for a provincial strategy to invest in expanding the role of the public library to support entrepreneurship, small businesses, start-up opportunities and cultural employment.

2.10 As digital technology increasingly shapes and broadens the meaning of culture – i.e. its creation, delivery and consumption – digital skills will become more critical to cultural engagement and inclusion. Many public libraries have already begun to shift from service models based on the consumption of content towards ones that focus also on the creation and sharing of content. And as we become community places to discover creative software, 3-D printing and other digital tools, we are well positioned to lower barriers and increase opportunities for cultural participation. Our unique value is the universality of the access we provide. Our doors are open to everyone in the community – 7 days a week – with no locked doors, and no barriers of language or age or income or immigration status. With further provincial investment in their digital infrastructure, public libraries across Ontario can efficiently, effectively and inclusively deliver the digital skill training needed to ensure that everyone can fully participate in Ontario's cultural ecosystems and creative sector.

3. Invest in strategies that will support community & culture development
Foster collaborative program and funding frameworks for cultural organizations and individuals to work in partnership with libraries:

3.1 Recognize the entry level role of libraries in promoting employment opportunities in cultural activities at the local level for artists, performers, artisans, musicians, Indigenous

and digital creators and create programs for province wide activities that build foundations for increasing their success.

3.2 Support cultural activities for all libraries but recognize the special needs and circumstances of rural, northern, francophone, and remote and Indigenous communities.

3.3 Build stronger supports for youth cultural programming in libraries.

3.4 Invest in a centralized, provincial online cultural event and activities directory as well as social media tools to help Ontarians fully engage in Ontario and Canadian culture through all cultural institutions including libraries.

3.5 Ensure that there is free public library service on every reserve in Ontario as well as a digital presence for all indigenous Ontario residents.

4. **Increased, mandatory, sustainable funding for school libraries** and staff to support the transition to digital resources. Research on the positive impact of School and Public libraries shows that the staff and programs have a strong and positive influence on student performance as well as the economic development of communities. Programs that encourage joint partnerships between schools and public libraries should be funded and encouraged. Research on the positive impact of libraries is clear and research shows that partnerships of this nature between school and public libraries delivers positive results. It is past the time where the province should lead by offering minimum foundational resources and standards for every school board and public library to create a seamless experience for our students aligned with their success in the 21st Century.

With funding and staffing in decline in school libraries in Ontario, public libraries are doing a lot to support learning and homework. An increased investment, as recommended, resulting in a cross-ministry strategy (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and Ministry of Education) to support e-resources will provide ubiquitous access and provide a level of opportunity for all of Ontario's students, particularly for smaller and more rural communities. We estimate the overall cost savings realized by a provincial strategy will be up to 35% to 50% if the above noted resources are collaboratively purchased for both sectors.

However, the Province must stop the decline of school libraries and set standards for funding and service for our students. Over 150 academic and large studies have shown that school libraries have a provable and materially positive impact on student performance and standardized testing scores. Indeed as the issue of digital literacies becomes paramount, these library professionals in teaching and research are essential to our students' performance and higher education readiness.

Recommendation No. 3:

Eligibility for infrastructure funding *for public libraries to renovate, build new branches, and become fully AODA compliant is needed now. Libraries are a provable economic engine in our communities. The budget process should consider ensuring that these vital 21st Century local institutions are more ready and accessible for their communities' economic and learning needs.*

Traditionally, infrastructure funding has been targeted to big construction projects like roads, transit, sewers, and water mains. While these main important it is clear that the 21st Century will be one where the knowledge economy dominates economic, cultural and community life.

As such, we must modernize our thinking about the kind of infrastructure that gains the most impact on the lives of Ontarians. Libraries are a key infrastructure component and worthy of province wide funding eligibility.

According to a report commissioned by FOPL, public libraries across the province are in an infrastructure deficit and have a high need for capital to create the libraries demanded by the communities. Libraries continue to adapt to the digital world and have done nothing but grow in usage as the Internet grew. Indeed for 25% of Ontarians, the public library is their only place to access the web effectively. For many communities it is the primary place for broadband access to information and government services.

Libraries serve as community hubs that can revitalize communities, encourage economic growth and welcome new residents and Canadians and much more.

Libraries are often neglected in the planning for capital grants and funding eligibility. With this budget you can address these weaknesses.

Recommendation No. 4:

Public libraries are key culture hubs *and deliver a very wide range of programs and activities as well as supporting Canadian authors and creators. This role should be recognized in funding eligibility and the need for new programs to ensure that grassroots artists, performers and artisans are funded beyond Ontario's large premier institutions.*

Our Context:

Ontario's libraries are by many measures one of the most popular cultural institutions in the province.

Ontario's publicly funded library sector includes academic, school and public libraries. For the scope of this consultation we recognize public libraries as a leading cultural hub, with opportunities to leverage staff, space, technology and programs to benefit Ontario cultural strategies.

Libraries Are Your Cultural Playground

Your local public and school library is a key support infrastructure for culture! Libraries are meeting and working with other community organizations to collectively support the aspirations and needs of their communities in a strategic way. Libraries are community hubs and are:

- A platform and space for cultural programs, projects and events
- A venue for local and Canadian art, craft, artisans and artists
- The public space for showcasing and learning about the literary arts (book culture), especially Local Canadian authors in reading series and their collections. Library cardholders discover Ontario and Canadian writers at the library.
- Digital learning hubs: 3-D printers, maker-spaces, digital literacy (how to use devices, programs, etc.) and the photographic arts.
- A connector to local historical associations to bring regional heritage (including a great deal of cultural heritage) to the fore. In some cases, local libraries can be de facto archives, or enhance the archival collections held elsewhere in the community. Many operate as museums and galleries for local culture and collections.
- A valuable source of genealogical information, which can then be used to highlight shared experiences.

Libraries are a discovery gateway for literary, film, fine and music arts, as well as the most comprehensive destination to access philosophies and academic studies on arts and culture.

Libraries are a public space where people of all cultures and who practice all beliefs are welcome and the place where barriers can be broken down through sharing and learning.

Our goal is to sustain the cultural vitality of a community by nurturing creative expression, hosting and promoting a range of culture events and celebrating diversity and ethnicities by inviting different generations and different cultures to come together to share experiences.

The Ontario library community would like to hear from communities how we can help people realize their cultural aspirations.

About Public Libraries in Ontario:

For just 49 cents per capita public libraries offer:

- Access to public library service for 99.34% of Ontarians and 444 municipalities offer public library service through 1,157 service outlets (with the exception of First Nation reserves, where there are limited public library services, **there is a public library in every community**).
- Public libraries are non-partisan and are free of charge by law.
- Almost 5.0 million Ontario residents have *active* library cards and over 73% of Ontarians used their library last year
- Ontarians borrow over 131 million items a year.
- Ontario's public libraries provide access to 11,500 public computer workstations, and hundreds of online resources.
- Ontario's public libraries offer 203,964 programs with annual attendance of 3,719,083 people.
- There are over 175,000,000 visits to libraries a year – in person and digitally.
- Many public libraries are located with other community hubs: in recreation centres, malls, and schools.

* *Source: 2013 Ontario Public Library Statistics, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport.*

All library services have grown as the digital age continues apace. Cardholders have increased, collections grow, and programs are hugely more popular than ever before.

EVERYONE LOVES PUBLIC LIBRARIES, BUT JUST HOW MUCH DO WE LOVE THEM IN ONTARIO?

72.5 Million Visits per year

198,630 Visits per day

8,276 Visits per hour

137 Visits per minute!

IN ONTARIO, PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE VISITED 72.5 MILLION TIMES EACH YEAR

That's 12 million more visits than the NFL, NHL and NBA's combined North American ticket sales

That's around 1.4 million visits per week – more people than live in Hamilton, Oshawa and Windsor combined!

That's 8,276 visits EVERY hour...

SO NEXT TIME SOMEONE SAYS LIBRARIES ARE NO LONGER RELEVANT, CONSIDER THOSE STATS FOR A MINUTE.
(AND DURING THAT MINUTE, 137 PEOPLE WILL VISIT A PUBLIC LIBRARY.)

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES BY TYPE: PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS ATTENDING

Any Museum: 32%

Public & Commercial Art Galleries: 33%

Any Performing Arts: 55.0%

Public Libraries: 73%

IN ONTARIO, PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE VISITED 198,000 TIMES EACH DAY

(If you lay all those people end-to-end they'd stretch all the way from Ottawa to Toronto...)

Libraries take the broadest view of what 'culture' means. We respect and support the mosaic of culture in Ontario while also acknowledging the local and community context of cultural activities. We support 'big' culture through community wide events, concerts, and fairs. We support the local artist and artisan movements. We provide opportunities for the creative class in our communities to thrive and exhibit and perform their creations. We also play a big role in the research and learning spheres where our residents, practitioners, learners and students have access to the resources (people, training, space, collections and technology) that allows them to succeed and learn.

Libraries provide many of cultural experiences! Whether it's a an entry level event for artists, writers, and artisans – local history exhibits, author reading series, art gallery shows highlighting local artists - or a major event - like Word on the Street, Local Concerts, Comic Con or Maker Fairs - that attracts tens of thousands of attendees. It's the diversity of programs that makes these great and has an impact on the individual artists, the attendees, and the exploration of Canadian culture at the local level that might be impractical in some smaller towns and regions. These programs in local libraries are growing rapidly and are in partnership and bring together many local groups to succeed.

From the library perspective, we see Ontarians increasingly engaging in their libraries as community hubs and cultural activities through library programs and partnerships with community arts organizations. According to a 2015 poll by Market Probe Canada, over 73% of Ontarians report using their public library – not just to borrow books, music and film, but to attend programs and engage with their community and culture. There is a lot of room for growth to benefit the quality of cultural life in all of Ontario's communities. Library activities are limited by the lack of clear frameworks for partnerships, inadequate space (including AODA compliance), funding issues, and more.

Libraries are very successful in attracting youth to a wide range of programs that go far beyond reading, research and homework. Many libraries now support makerspace activities, arts and crafts, digital innovation centres to create and edit and promote their music, film and spoken word works. These programs attract a wide range of teens and young adults while creating a safe space to explore their talents and abilities.

A 2013 OLA study confirms that more than 70% of Ontario's public libraries offer programs specifically developed for teens. More than half of Ontario public libraries have teen committees planning programming and are involved with collections. The most popular programs for teens are book clubs, maker-spaces, film and video, and arts and crafts.

There is a specific need for greater encouragement and funding for local arts as well as collaboration frameworks for a broader strategy focused on the local cultural sector. Libraries are the only space that exists in every community that is fully open to all. Not every community in Ontario has a bank, a post office, a Tim Horton's, or a mall. Every town has a library that is staffed and has space, open hours, collections, WiFi and technology

open to all with professional help and programs for all. Indeed it's the library sector that provides the infrastructure for e-government, government program delivery at all levels, and learning support for all residents of Ontario. Indeed, for the 25% of Ontarians who do not have access to the internet at home or work, libraries level the playing field for access to culture digitally and the broader world for Ontario's residents.

A cultural hub strategy for local communities which could form a framework to provide the opportunity for various local culture and arts programs to meet and design a community strategy. Public libraries are a logical centre for this transformational activity.

Libraries continue to innovate on many levels and have seen huge usage increases in their usage since the advent of the Internet and digital tools and resources. Libraries are a poster child for great adaptation to changing conditions in the 21st Century world. That said, there is a need for:

- Better funding frameworks to support further innovation through cultural hubs like libraries which are infrastructure that is both well managed and costs effective and has a long history of partnerships with the cultural sector and organizations.
- Increased involvement of the library sector in government program and policy planning. Libraries are often playing catch up to address government policy priorities and the needs of our communities.
- Increased recognition of the role of libraries in the development of the creative class and cultural employment which, while it can be a secondary employment sector, more youthful, and often precarious world, is inhabited by passionate talented residents who can be world class artists, creators, and innovators.
- Ensuring that all libraries have ubiquitous access to broadband infrastructure (including First Nations reserves) and up-to-date technology and digital resources that support the kinds of things that artists and cultural creators use.

In a time of scarce resources, libraries can work in partnership with the government to deliver cultural priorities:

- Libraries are recognized, safe repositories of Canadian content and cultural creations. These institutions in all sectors need to be recognized in government planning and policy implementation. Grants that could be directed to libraries to improve their cultural infrastructure are needed. Libraries already have good facilities with programming space, and are ubiquitous in every community, but for a small investment these facilities could be upgraded or expanded to make them more amenable to things like performances and other cultural events. For some it may be as simple as buying a set of theatre-style chairs or professional art hanging systems. For others it may be increasing the Canadian content in their collections.

- Create opportunities for cross-fertilization of ideas and partnerships across cultural media with the library sector, including urging inter-ministerial cooperation such as the Ministries of Education and Tourism etc. working together more collaboratively.
- Recognize that the entry point for culture is NOT with the Big C cultural institutions but at the local level and in our learning institutions of K-12 and Higher Ed. Smaller venues and events are where future careers (and fame) are practiced and these are essential to the planning frameworks for a successful culture strategy. Libraries are an essential component of these foundations.
- There is concern about the lack of awareness about cultural happenings at the local level. We should consider a central provincial database, calendar and website as well as social media tools that allow people to filter the activities they are interested in by their profile, location and interests. Some libraries create these calendars for their communities and it places library programming in the greater community context.
- Much like the Early Years Strategy promoted interest in reading from the earliest age, we need to start Ontarians young and offer greater support and standards for school-based programs for arts and culture (music, theatre arts, performances, art/craft, and more). Could there be a provincial tax break for enrolling your kids in cultural programming?
- We need specific strategies to support those Ontarians who live in regions where cultural activities are essential but largely unaffordable. Strategies to support First Nations, incarcerated individuals, rural and remote regions, and more need to be considered beyond just the big towns and cities.
- We need to increase and support collaborative frameworks for strengthening curriculum strategies across public libraries, school libraries and school boards.

Libraries can participate:

- In our role as connectors – connecting cultural media to one another is natural for us (bringing a book to life via films, theatre, spoken word poetry, linking the opera to mythology, books about painting etc.) and we are a natural hub;
- In our role as facilitators of lifelong learning: bringing the maker culture into the creative realm, for instance;
- As a cultural institution that has many customers and garners public respect – available to partner on grant applications;
- As a low-barrier physical space that equalizes members of the community and provides a natural third place for cultural events and collaborations;

Summary OLA/FOPL Culture Recommendations

1. Include the library sector in all policy planning especial for education, community hub and cultural planning.
2. Support Canadian authors by encouraging the provision and acquisition of their works by libraries and in the curriculum – in print, digitally, and including non-print cultural collections like music and film.
3. Support cultural activities for all libraries but recognize the special needs and circumstances of rural, northern, francophone, and remote and Indigenous communities.
4. Build stronger supports for early years and youth cultural programming in libraries.
5. Consider building a centralized cultural events and activities provincial database, calendar and website as well as social media tools that allow people to filter the activities they are interested in by their profile, location and interests as well as allowing the program and event planners to promote their initiatives.
6. Recognize the entry level role of libraries in promoting cultural activities at the local level for artists, performers, artisans, musicians, and digital creators and create programs for province-wide activities that build foundations for increasing their success.
7. Foster collaborative frameworks for cultural organizations and individuals to work in partnership with libraries. Add the principle of 'Cooperation, Collaboration and Partnerships'.
8. Share government sponsored and collected data on the cultural sector transparently as an open data initiative. Encourage and support the GIS mapping tools necessary for targeted analysis and program prioritization.
9. Better funding frameworks that encourage and support collaboration to support further innovation and renovation through cultural hubs like libraries which are infrastructure that is both well managed and costs effective and has a long history of partnerships with the cultural sector and organizations.
10. Increase involvement of the library sector in Ontario government program and policy planning.
11. Increase the recognition of the role of libraries in the development of the creative class and cultural employment which, while it can be a secondary employment sector, more youthful, and often precarious world, is inhabited by passionate talented residents who can be world class artists, creators, and innovators.
12. Ensure that all libraries have ubiquitous access to broadband infrastructure (including First Nations reserves) and up-to-date technology and the digital resources that support the kinds of things that artists and cultural creators use.
13. Cross license digital resources that support learning and creative activities across both the public library and K-12 educational sector to create seamless access and experiences to support Ontarians successful learning and skills growth.

Recommendation No. 5:

Public libraries are Ontario's primary (and original) community hubs. As such they contribute to the delivery of the Ontario government's goals for e-government, policy and program delivery, education, and the attendant savings and productivity. Public libraries should be considered in all government funding and priorities as key partners in the delivery of provincial government policy goals. (For example, many public libraries are already delivering programs for new Canadians and refugees and have a long track record of positive success with Early Years programs. Increasingly some families are able to receive access to innovative technologies such as 3D printers, drones, programmable robots, etc. These are hands-on learning opportunities that ought to be available to all and align with the STEAM education goals as well as develop creative spaces in every community.

Our big message here is that Ontario's libraries already act as community hubs for culture employment, education, and community growth and satisfaction and success - and have done so for centuries. The diversity of locations, talent, technology, programming, and open hours can accomplish more for Ontario and Ontarians. We have a long history of community partnerships and working on a collaborative basis and within shared governance models. By embedding libraries into the culture planning cycle and considerations of all ministries, there is a huge opportunity to ensure improved success of government policies, programs and goals in a cost effective and more efficient way and to support the employment, innovation, creativity, and economic impact of our cultural sector.

Ontario's Libraries are Community Hubs

Ontario's publicly funded library sector includes academic, school and public libraries. Public libraries are the leading community hub, with opportunities to leverage school spaces and programs.

We have a number of observations and recommendations due to our experiences as vital community hubs.

About Public Libraries in Ontario:

For just 49 cents per capita (currently provincially) public libraries offer:

- Access to public library service for 99.34% of Ontarians and 444 municipalities offer public library service through 1,157 service outlets (with the exception of First Nation reserves, where there are limited public library services, there is a public library in every community).
- Public libraries are non-partisan and are free of charge by law.

- Almost 5.0 million Ontario residents have *active* library cards and over 75% of Ontarians used their library last year
- Ontarians borrow over 131 million items a year.
- Ontario's public libraries provide access to 11,500 public computer workstations, and hundreds of online resources.
- Ontario's public libraries offer 203,964 programs with annual attendance of 3,719,083 people.
- There are over 175,000,000 visits to libraries a year – in person and digitally.
- Many public libraries are located with other community hubs: in recreation centres, malls, and schools.

Source: 2013 Ontario Public Library Statistics, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport.

Community Hubs strengthen communities by providing free, interactive, socially engaging, learning, collaborative, recreational and welcome spaces and services. Community hubs provide the opportunity to leverage public dollars and to support a common approach to community development.

Community Hubs need to offer the following – Public Libraries do this:

- Business and Economic development: support for small business including resources and space
- Employment support and resources
- Newcomer programs
- Early literacy development
- Access to e-government
- Leisure (reading and activities)
- Education and learning
- Outreach services to nursing homes, hospitals, shelters, etc.
- Leveraged resource coordination

School Libraries are recognized as a complementary hub reflecting much of what public libraries offer, but to a more specific audience:

- Providing equitable access to leveraged physical/virtual resources to meet the needs of differentiated learners, engaged in inquiry-based learning across the JK to gr 12 spectrum
- Foster collaborative teaching and learning practices/environments as represented in the library learning commons
- Reading engagement/literacy development through reading clubs and family reading/literacy programs/evening events
- Integrate digital learning
- Parent volunteer involvement

We see great opportunities and many examples in the library sector for collaboration and use of community spaces, and a provincial approach to leveraging local resources.

We believe that successful *community hubs* are based on several philosophical assumptions that can underpin their long term success:
- An open, non-partisan space that welcomes all.
- A dynamic space for learning programs, social engagement, and recreation.
- A space that is staffed with trained professionals.
- A space that is community led and models shared governance.

As a sector with long and deep experience with community hub strategies, and with regard to Community Hub explorations and discussions, we note the following opportunities to ensure greater success and impact on Ontarians lives – learning, recreation, economic and social vitality.

Recommendation No. 6:

First Nations Libraries on Reserve

The majority of our reserves in Ontario do *not* have libraries - school or public. This is tragic and unacceptable. This is a systemic fault that is intended to be addressed by the Truth & Reconciliation Report's recommendations. Excitingly, during teen focus groups on the Attawapiskat Reserve, a First Nation public library on reserve was one of the teens' key recommendations and ideas. Often reserve schools do not offer education through the grade 12 level, which causes family separation and social upheaval. Public and School libraries – sometimes in joint facilities – provide a safe place to learn, play and succeed. It appears that this is primarily an example of lack of joint federal/provincial cooperation and more effort needs to be applied to use libraries as a lever to improve opportunity, community vitality, and social equity on reserve.

Recommendation: Set standards for library services on reserves of all sizes and achieve joint planning and cooperation with band councils and all levels of government to ensure that equitable access to resources, technology, programs and learning are available to Ontario's reserve residents. Fund libraries, digital and print access to collections, and connectivity on reserve. The First Nations Library Association and FOPL's First Nations Caucus stand ready to assist.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. **Recommendation**: We recommend that the cabinet consider directing key ministries to develop cooperative frameworks that respect – and fund, liaise and communicate – the role of Public Libraries in their program plans. Particular focus is needed on the relationships between Culture, Tourism and Sport, Education, Training, Colleges and Universities, Aboriginal Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration, Labour, Health, and Economic Development and Infrastructure.

2. **Recommendation:** Include, where appropriate, public library buildings (new and renovations) in the eligibility requirements for public sector infrastructure grants.

3. **Recommendation:** Finish the retrofitting of our current building infrastructure (schools, libraries, community centres, etc.) by ensuring that our public buildings are accessible to all and meet AODA requirements. Community Hubs must be accessible to all. Too many libraries don't have access to necessary funding for accessibility changes at the municipal or provincial level.

4. **Recommendation:** Ensure a province-wide policy for usage of public facilities in their role as community hubs – which may be secondary to their primary role. Too many Ontario residents are paying twice or more times for use of their public buildings.

5. **Recommendation**: Basic Resource Licensing for digital resources of all types should use the infrastructure already maintained by SOLS/OLS-North so that equity, learning and development are supported and encouraged. These licenses should be predicated on a seamless experience between school library during the day and Public Library support on nights and weekends for homework support. All databases should be accessible from anywhere. It is fiscal and pedagogical insanity to expect every board to maintain and finance their own licensing teams. This also creates inequities for many school boards – especially the smaller, more rural, francophone, native, and more northern boards. In particular, the current mosaic of digital resource acquisitions strategies can only result in higher basic total costs and considerably higher support costs for purchase and training. This is unacceptable in a society based on equity.

6. **Recommendation**: Consider public and school libraries in the strategies for distance education in Higher Ed as well as online learning in K-12 schools. Understand the training, support, access, and funding implications of this. Not including libraries in the equation doesn't make it go away – Ontarians still come to our doors.

7. **Recommendation**: Build Public Libraries' funding into education and homework strategies – especially the critical thinking, digital literacy, and information fluency strands - in this province. Recognize this through joint funding (since it will be more cost-effective) and ensure that School Libraries and educators are allied with Public Library strategies as a component of their delivery and support strategies.

8. **Recommendation**: Fund and set standards for indigenous public library services on reserves of all sizes and achieve joint planning and cooperation with band councils and all levels of government to ensure that equitable access to resources, technology, programs and learning are available to Ontario's reserve residents.