March 20, 2018

The Honourable Charles Sousa

Minister of Finance

Province of Ontario

7th Floor, Frost Building South

7 Queen’s Park Crescent

Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Y7

Dear Minister Sousa:

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) have submitted a budget request to the Ontario provincial government for sustainable, predictable funding for all public libraries and First Nations libraries across Ontario by increasing annual base funding from $33 million to $50 million – an increase of $17 million in annual funding. Currently, the Toronto Public Library receives $4.1 million in annual operating funds, which has been flat-lined since the 1990’s.

In addition, OLA and FOPL have requested $25 million in annual funding for the development and implementation of Ontario’s Digital Library. This initiative will support the development of digital content and make additional resources available to Ontarians.

The Toronto Public Library Board urges the Province of Ontario to:

* recognize the contribution of public libraries within their communities and to cease the 20-year budget freeze in public library funding;
* reinstate adequate and appropriate funding for public libraries, increasing each year going forward in line with the consumer price index; and
* dedicate $25 million in annual funding for the development and implementation of Ontario’s Digital Library.

Public libraries provide safe, inclusive and vibrant public spaces that offer digital inclusion, cultural programming and lifelong learning opportunities, where all are welcome to learn, work, connect and collaborate.

Public libraries serve residents and communities in ways no other institution can. They empower Ontarians to thrive in the digital age and global knowledge economy through expanded access to technology, lifelong learning and diverse cultural and leisure experiences, online, in our branches and in the community. No other public institution has the mandate and reach, physical and technical infrastructure, talent and community presence to support digital inclusion and literacy for all.

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Public libraries engage with the community and contribute to a culture of economic and social equity by providing free and open access to a diversity of information and resources in a welcoming and safe environment.

Public libraries continue to transform and modernize their services to meet the changing needs of Ontarians and support provincial initiatives such as poverty reduction, lifelong learning and skill development, local economic development, health literacy, and equitable access to provincial government websites, e-resources and services.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Sue Graham-Nutter

Chair, Toronto Public Library Board

/nrm

c: Premier Kathleen Wynne

 Province of Ontario

 Minister Daiene Vernile

 Tourism, Culture and Sport

 Mayor John Tory

 City of Toronto