

AGENDA ITEM DOC4

Subject: **FOPL Executive Director Update based on 2019-2020 Goals**

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Once again, I am reporting FOPL activities based on the FOPL Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (revised Nov. 2019). Maybe not so surprisingly, but life and FOPL work has been remarkably busy during this stay-at-home period

FOPL deals with Ontario public library issues - big and small - every day lately - even weekends.

Helen and I do go into the office around once a week to collect mail, sign cheques, and generally make sure things are fine

# The BIG Stuff in the past 3 months:

Obviously, our Top Priority that has upended all other is the COVID-19 Emergency where the rules and direction changed daily. That said, there are a number of files that continue to require attention and the provision of information and advice to the provincial government.

We worked closely with Counsel Public Affairs to keep public libraries on the government’s radar.

My prediction is that this so-called ‘new normal’ will see a vastly different approach to government priorities and decision making over the next few years. We should expect and prepare for more emergency legislations, funding, shutdowns, and changes over the next three years at a minimum.

# Communication

As policy and direction from the province dribbled out, we tried to provide context for our members on our blog and in e-mailings.

A top priority has been communication with our members. For example:

* Stephen collected, shared, or wrote quite a number of pieces about issues related to shutdowns, safety, cleanliness, re-openings, curbside pick-up, etc.
* Stephen drafted curbside pick-up guidelines and worked with SOLS, OLS-North, and OLA to make this a sector-wide recommendation. We ran it past MHSTCI and got verbal endorsement.
* Stephen has drafted re-opening guidelines and recommendations which are shared with SOLS, OLS-North, OLA, OLBA, and CULC. These are still draft as we await the provincial government frameworks, authorizations, and dates.
* Stephen wrote and shared pieces on COVID and Post-COVID-19 marketing, collection development, safety, and HR issues, etc.
* Stephen shares 3-6 pieces a day on the FOPL OpenMediaDesk Facebook group which has grown a lot. Public Libraries’ digital presence has been one of the success stories of the shutdown and FOPL supports sharing free resources for home learning, safety, mental health, technologies like Zoom, work-from-home, fun, and cultural tours, and more.
* Stephen has participated in quite a number of Zoom sessions and webinars for SOLS, OLA, OLBA, FOPL, etc. on various aspects of post-COVID-19 planning and direction.

We continue to talk and influences our partners and many more Ministries than usual about:

1. FOPL worked with the MHSTCI to achieve the early release of the PLOG funding as well as all of our other normal provincial funding streams (Pay equity, SOLS/OLS-North, OLA, connectivity). This will be announced soon. A thank you letter has been drafted to the Minister.
2. We continue to work with the business planning team at ServiceOntario. It has been complicated by the work-at-home issues, but it appears to be on schedule to include a revised, re-imagined program and funding for public libraries.
3. Stephen and Counsel have provided extensive research, new polls, and data to the Ministry of Infrastructure. They are working on the business case for fibre based broadband funding for public libraries. Stephen committed to provide them with the draft words and supporting documentation for their business case. We expect this funding to form part of a fall announcement.
4. Library Boards ARE the employer and NOT subject to direct municipal control. We have a number of concerns about how the PLA is enforced by MHSTCI and attached is a letter sent to ‘our’ Minister as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about our concerns with the stability of municipal financing and library budgets/workforces.
5. Library Boards must have authorization to hold virtual meetings and we achieved a Ministerial order to accomplish this as well as full guidance. We have also requested that this be extended through the summer at a minimum or made permanent.
6. Bill 108 regulations and DC/CBC implementation. We have a strong understanding with MMAH and good 2-way conversations. We are in a winning position for libraries and some of our partners. I believe that these will be issued in summer 2020 with full guidance for municipalities. When we know the playing field, we can provide training and guidance for our Boards and CEOs.
7. As a response to COVID-19, FOPL opened the FOPL OpenMediaDesk Facebook Group to all library staff in Ontario and we populate it with a ton of resources, advice, and ideas daily. We have had many new group members and great compliments.
8. FOPL is communicating on a timely basis any relevant library issues and advice (although IANAL) through our website blog, Twitter and our three Facebook groups (and through private e-mails and phone calls).
9. We (FOPL, OLA, SOLS, OLS-North) meet on a weekly basis with Kevin Finnerty, ADM at MHSTCI as well as on our own to coordinate. We meet weekly with Counsel Public Affairs on all issues with a standard agenda. It is in these forums that we try to influence the COVID-19 and provincial policy issues.
10. We were able to get, through Access to Information request the consulting report about the Ontario Digital Public Library (ODPL). It is important information that underpins our bigger “ASK”. Although the full Ontario provincial budget was cancelled and an economic statement that will last one year was issued digitally on March 25, 2020. We continue to position our ODPL initiative as a sustainable response to the COVID-19 crisis as well as broadband and educational initiatives.
11. Our Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant project continues. We have had conversations with OTF and gotten their permission to adjust the strategies and meetings to accommodate COVID issues without compromising expected results.
12. We have advised MHSTCI on plans for the 2020/21 minister’s awards and some temporary changes that may be logical.
13. FOPL’s resilience is in great shape.
    1. Stephen and Helen are working successfully from home. (We both can tell stories!)
    2. Helen has VPN access to all of our systems at TPL and Stephen backed up every digital FOPL file on a portable terabyte drive and has it at home.
    3. To our credit, Helen was successful in renewing all full members. I believe our successes lately and hopefully throughout 2020 will gain more.
    4. I think we may achieve some minor savings in planned conferences that have been cancelled as well as Board meetings moved to teleconferences.
    5. Our automated payroll and cheque services can continue because of the modernization changes we made last year.
    6. If needed TRL security can provide access to our offices to pick something up.