

**FOPL CHAIR REPORT**

**Subject: FOPL Chair Report**

**Date: Jan 18, 2021**

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**Prepared for: FOPL AGM, Feb. 1, 2021**

2020 was a been a rough ride, in any number of ways, and the Library sector has done an admirable job of staying the course. With your support and membership FOPL has continued to be able to advocate for the government policies and resources that libraries need.

Highlights of the 2020 work include:

1. FOPL effectively communicated with the MHSTCI regarding the needs of Libraries during the pandemic, achieving:
   1. Formal ability for libraries to hold virtual Board meetings
   2. The inclusion of Libraries in the early stages of re-opening, and inclusion of essential in-person library services through all scenarios from Green to the Grey “lockdown”
   3. The early release of the PLOG and other funding streams
   4. Entering the second Shutdown in December, we continued to advocate for the necessity of library services in supporting the community during the pandemic, as well as the longer-term role of libraries in facilitating province-wide access to digital infrastructure
2. Throughout 2019-20, we successfully defended the continued inclusion of libraries in Bill 108, resulting in an *increase* in the amount of money that can be collected for libraries through development charges from 90% to 100%. The new regulations also preserve libraries’ ability to use development charge funds for IT and collection development purposes, maintaining the flexibility and usefulness of the funds.
3. With a Trillium Grant, piloting a project called MINE: Mobile Information for Newcomer Employment. This project seeks to find new ways to connect libraries with New Canadians and facilitate improved employment and economic growth.
4. The Open Media Desk has continued as a sustainable e-learning project for Library marketing staff to grow their storytelling & social media skills, as well as a shared resource for pandemic-related information, ensuring that libraries have current information to share with their users without duplicating efforts.
5. FOPL has continued to work collaboratively with OLA and the OLSs, for maximum effect.

Preview of some of the 2021 work already under way:

1. Expert guidance and training for members on development charges to come in 2021. Training and education on Provincial-level topics is part of FOPL’s current strategic plan and increased knowledge about development charges is essential for the many new CEOs to be able to advocate for their libraries when their municipalities draft new DC by-laws.
2. With the release of the 2019 Annual Survey of Public Libraries data in December 2020, FOPL will be completing another entry in the FOPL Open Dataset series. Underpinning all our advocacy work with Province-wide data describing the trends, successes, and gaps in Ontario’s Public Libraries, this is a valuable report for all libraries. Statistical comparison reports for individual libraries available on request.
3. Budget advocacy for 2021 continues; having avoided cuts in 2020, in partnership with OLA and our government relations firm we are focusing on increasing spending on an Ontario Digital Public Library and broadband infrastructure.  We are also keeping a close eye on any budgetary items related to ServiceOntario, SOLS/OLS-North, schools, and digital initiatives.

I would like to assure you that despite the departure of Stephen Abram in October, that the Board’s Executive Committee and FOPL’s Administrative Assistant Helen have all risen to the occasion and kept the work going smoothly. We all look forward to the appointment of a new ED in early 2021, and continuing the good work!

Finally, many thanks are due to the Ontario library community for its ongoing support of FOPL – together we are building on the traditions of excellence and resilience in our sector.